Divine Aspiration

His Divine Grace
Swāmī B.R. Śrīdhar

All Glories to Śrī Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga

Divine Aspiration

by
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Swāmī B.R. Śrīdhar

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Sevāte-President-Āchārya
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, Nabadwīp

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Printing Costs Donated by:
Śyāmasundara Prabhu
Ananta Rupa Prabhu
Lila Shakti Devi Dasi

Published by
Ananta Printing & Publishing
2825 S. Rodeo Gulch Rd. #4
Soquel, California 95073 U.S.A.

under the Divine Guidance of
Oṁ Viṣṇupād Aṣtottara-śata-śrī-
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for
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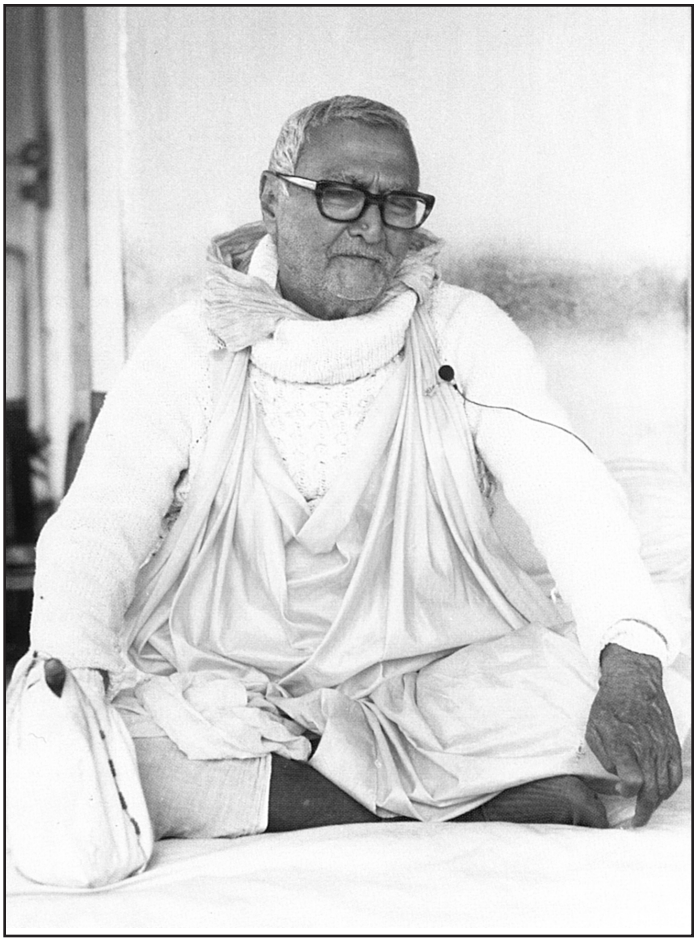

His Divine Grace
Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh
Śrī Dhām Nabadwīp

Śrī Śrī Guru-Gauranga-Gandharva-Govindasundarjiu
Nabadwīp Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh

Introduction

The talks from which this book was made, were recorded between 1981-87 at Śrī Caitanya Saraswat Maṭh in Śrī Nabadwīp Dham, West Bengal. The reader will quickly discover that he is hearing from a highly spiritually-realized soul about a subject which seems beyond the compass of 'everyday' matters but yet which is of quintessential importance to every living being in the human form. For those fortunate souls exclusively interested in the dedicated aspiration for Krishna Consciousness, Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj was, and is, an undisputed king—the 'Emperor of Sannyasi Kings'. He was sought out by many both for his unique representation of the science of Krishna Consciousness, and the uplifting effect of his personal association; in him, these two were synonomous.

Several books extracted from the many hours of Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj's recorded informal talks have already been presented to the public. This Divine Aspiration continues the series. Perhaps, however, the subject matter selected here addresses the more practical concerns of the spiritual aspirant (for example, the chapter "Worship of the Pure Heart"), as well as focusing on the progres-

sive awakening of his inner consciousness through the process of selection and elimination, a favorite essential theme of His Divine Grace (see 'Gradations of Theism').

Man's needs are essentially simple, but his desires are complex. It is in these desires that he becomes entangled and loses sight of his life's true purpose. The adage of saints and sages of all traditions has always been "simple living and high thinking". This has never shown itself to be more true than in the present day of global uncertainty: surrounded as man is by his self-created ghosts of pollution, war, epidemic and so on. In these talks we are reminded again by a great Spiritual Master that the solution lies not in any partial attempt, whether social, economic, religious or otherwise, but in nothing less than reestablishing our relationship with the Supreme Being Himself. If this appears beyond the reach of most of us, then His Divine Grace also assures us that we can receive the most substantial guidance in our attempt through an affectionate serving-association with a living saint who has already traveled this path.

For the dedicated followers of Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj, such an opportunity has mercifully been provided, in the form of His Divine Grace's beloved disciple and appointed Successor-Ācārya, Śrīla Bhakti Sundar

Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, who is travelling the globe tirelessly, enlightening and nourishing devotees and spiritual seekers with his affectionate association. To him this book is respectfully dedicated.

This attempt would not have been possible without the help of many good friends and helpers. I would like to express my appreciation to those who assisted me through its various stages, especially: Śrīman Mahānanda Prabhu, Mohita Krishna Prabhu, Munīndra Mohan Prabhu, Śyāmasundara Prabhu, Krishna-kāntā devi, Ananda-tirtha Prabhu and Vrajavanesvari devi, Vinode Bihari Prabhu, and Devasvarupa Prabhu. Finally I would ask the kind reader to forgive any mistakes herein which are probably my own.

Hare Krishna
B.S. Tridandi Swāmī
9 Damodar, 30 October 2002

Appearance of: Śrīla B.R.Śrīdhar Mahārāj
Śrīla Viracandra Prabhu / Disappearance of Śrīpad Sakhicaran dās Bābājī Mahārāj

The Worship of the Pure Heart

Student: Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, in the *Gaṇeśah-kaṇḍa* section of *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, the history of Śrī Paraśurāma is related. I read there that Lord Śiva gave Paraśurāma a protective mantra, a *Kṛṣṇa-kavaca*. But one devotee told me that in this Age, *Kali-yuga*, the only really potent *kavaca* is *Narasiṁha-kavaca*. My question is: what is true about these *kavacas*? Is it possible in the present day for anyone to be given, or to accept, these *kavacas* that appear in the ancient scriptures? Is it necessary or practical?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: The use of *kavacas* is, on the whole, an external affair. The *Mantra* (Gāyatrī) and the *Nāma* (Hare Krishna) are all-useful and all-powerful, and using the *kavaca* to help externally is a thing of minor importance. The *nāma*, the Lord's Name, and the Lord whose Name it is are one and the same; that is enough. It is sufficient, complete. In the mundane world to help us we can sometimes accept the *kavacas*, but that is not of very great importance. We may accept

either *kṛṣṇa-kavaca* or *narasiṁha-kavaca* to help our *bhajan* (worship), but not at the cost of faith in the divine Name, *nāma-bhajan*, which is the best of all; even the (Gāyatrī) *mantra* is to help *nāma-bhajan*.

kṛṣṇa-mantra haite habe saṁsāra-mocana
kṛṣṇa-nāma haite pābe kṛṣṇera caraṇa
(Cc. Adi-lila 7.73)

"Simply by chanting the Holy Name of Krishna one can obtain freedom from material existence. Indeed, simply by chanting the Hare Krishna *mantra* one will be able to see the lotus feet of the Lord."

The worship of the Name, *nāma-bhajan*, is the highest, and we shall stick to that with our whole concentration. To see or to look for other things to help it may be allowed to a certain extent. But not much attention should be given to those external things; they are only something like a *varṇa*, a kind of dress, a covering for protection. So, there is not much harm if we take *kṛṣṇa-kavaca* or *narasiṁha-kavaca* with this intention: "It has come to help my *nāma-bhajan* life." If meant in this way, it may be allowed, but it is not the highest standard.

The general purpose of using the *kavaca* is to protect us from the external or superficial difficulties. But the pure devotees of Krishna, they won't be afraid of any

external difficulties. Rather, they may invite them like Queen Kuntī, who said: "External dangers—let them come and attack me. I don't care for them; I shall go on with my service."

In using the *kavaca* there is some *karmic* connection, but if that is to help the good, then its use may be acceptable. Still, in the highest form of *bhajan*, everything is depending on His will. The devotee thinks, "Whether I may be in danger or in happiness, I shall go on with my *nāma-bhajan* without any care for the external conditions that may come to me according to my previous *karma*. I may be in hell, heaven or anywhere else; I won't waste my energy going to any other direction. I will go on with *nāma-bhajan*." *Bhajan* done in this mood is of the higher quality. Do you follow?

Student: Yes.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: In Prahlāda Mahārāj, and others, we see such an attitude: "Dangers may come, at their wish, with their extreme power to disturb me; I don't care." So, *paśu-pākhī haya tabe*—wherever my *karma* may take me, even to the body of bird or beast, I won't pray to Krishna for favorable circumstances. I shall utilize my energy best only towards Him. I shall only want from Him: "Your sweet will may be victorious. You can

make or mar. You can kill me or save me. If it is necessary for Your sweet enjoyment to kill me, You can do that. I am a slave and You have every right over me, to do anything and everything." With this conception in the background we have to make our approach towards Him, and that will be of the highest quality. Our *bhajan* should be in this line.

In our worship we are not seeking comfort from Him or anything outside. We won't pray: "O Krishna, You please create protection. I am going towards You, so please manage my protection." Our *bhajan* should be of this purest type: "You may do whatever you like; I want your service. I want only that Your sweet will may be satisfied by me." There is to be such total self-forgetfulness in the service of Krishna. The whole concentration will be: "How can I satisfy You?"

Highest Ideal

Whatever troubles may come upon us we must not deviate our attention from that main purpose to any of those external things. The quality and intensity of our *bhajan* will be less if we are very eager to maintain our safety as we are proceeding on the path of our devotional life. Such concerns should be uncared for as much as possible, and our only concern should be: "I want

Your satisfaction." And in that attempt, one must be self-forgetful as much as possible.

But according to their *adhikāra*, capacity, the practitioners may sometimes take the help of some protection on their way. That may be tolerated, but to seek protection on the path in this way is not the ideal. "I am going to You; please protect me on my way, please manage for me, for my protection." Our fundamental attitude should not be such. But rather, we should think: "Whatever comes to me, it is Your sweet will; I won't pray for protection."

Student: I have another question connected to this. I am studying Indian Vedic astrology. In my studies I have made some astrological charts for devotees. I see the natal chart is like a photograph of the *karma* of the person. So my question is: what is the use of astrology for a devotee, or in devotional service? Does it have some use?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Just as general education, money, learning, physical health and other things are necessary for the purpose of preaching, so may be knowledge of astrology in a particular situation. But all such items are subsidiary; they are not the all-important thing. Generally, the public is attracted by the astrological statement, so it may be used like bait to capture people, so as to gradually convert them. Just as one devotee

when asked by Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj Prabhupād to go to China to preach, said: "I shall go there and open a hostel; in this way, men will come, and I shall capture them for Krishna's service!" This is, in itself, not *śuddha-bhakti*, pure devotion, but it is *ānukūlasya-saṅkalpāh*, it may be favorable for the cause. Namācārya Haridās Ṭhākur used to give sweets to the children, and then ask them "Take the Name, the Name of the Lord, Krishna. Say Krishna!" First he is distributing sweets and then telling them "Say Krishna!" It is a strategy like that.

So, astrology may be utilized to create some confidence in the general public so that they will think: "This man is first-class, so I should be as a disciple to him." In this way they may be taken gradually towards the real path. Such an approach is *ānukūlasya-saṅkalpāh*; it may be *ānukūla*, a favourable step towards devotion proper. But pure devotion, *śuddha-bhakti*, is not dependent on any such things.

Knowledge and Renunciation

Even *jñāna* (knowledge) and *vairāgya* (abnegation, indifference, renunciation), are not a part of real devotion: *jñāna-vairāgyādi bhaktira kabhu nahe 'aṅga'* (Cc.Madhya 22:145). *Vairāgya* means abnegation, "I don't want anything," to have no taste for all the things

of this world. For example, someone may be taking food only once in a day; or even he may not be using any clothes. In all such matters he is indifferent. '*Virāg*' means indifference to everything in this world; but that also is not intrinsically a part of devotion. And it is so with *jñāna*, knowledge: *na jñānam na ca vairāgyaṁ, prāyaḥ śreyo bhaved iha* (S.Bhag. 2:32-33). Both *jñāna* and v*airāgya*, which are the real property of the *jñāni* and *yogī* schools, are not a part of devotion; then what to speak of other things?

vāsudeve bhagavati
bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ
janayaty āśu vairāgyaṁ
jñānaṁ ca yad ahaitukam
(S.Bhag. 1:2:7)

Here it is told that real *jñāna* and *vairāgya* will come as the consequence of *bhakti*. As a result of devotion, the proper abnegation and proper knowledge will come. Otherwise, through the empirical method, ordinary knowledge and ordinary apathy towards worldly things cannot create devotion proper. "By self-abnegation, learning all these worldly things, I shall gradually attain *bhakti*"—it is not so. But, *bhaktyā-sanjatayā-bhaktyā: bhakti* is the cause of *bhakti*. Devotion is its own cause. When I

get devotion proper, the real *vairāgya*, self-abnegation, and knowledge, will come in its retinue, naturally; that is normal. Otherwise, neither ordinary self-abnegation, the mood or tendency of renunciation, nor knowledge of the worldly matters can produce real devotion.

Help the People

So the knowledge of astronomy, astrology, mathematics, or all the great achievements of science, like those of Einstein, may be utilized to capture the ordinary people, who may then be introduced to pure devotion to Krishna. They are a kind of bait, like *laddu* sweets: by distributing the sweets one may attract the person and then tell him, who Lord Krishna is: "The sweetest thing is Krishna!" That is in the line of *ānukūlasya-saṅkalpāh*, favorability to the cause. This should not be misinterpreted to mean that we should try to acquire some special power, like the knowledge of hypnotism, and hypnotise whoever will come and then give them the *mantra*. That is all artificial; it is a misunderstanding. But to capture the mind of the other party with such attractions like astrology, and thereby defeat their mental pride, crush their vanity, and then to help them to come forward with surrender so the true thing can be distributed to them—in this way, such knowledge may be utilized. Is it clear?

Student: Very clear, Mahārāj. There is something else I would like to ask. I have now passed three years in the *sannyāsa āśrama*. So I want to ask, to pray to your Divine Grace for some instruction, some practical advice about *sannyasa* life.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Always keep in association with the *vaiṣṇava* of the higher plane in order to keep yourself healthy, to supply yourself with vitality. Whatever you do, whether it is preaching or any other service—it is to keep the vitality within you. That can come from the association of the 'dynamos': the *vaiṣṇava*s. That is the main idea: to keep your life intact and then go on with work. Because if the vitality diminishes, then everything will go; it will be lost. So most important is the spiritual vitality and its supply; and the source of that supply, the dynamo, is the *vaiṣṇava*. When the *vaiṣṇava* is absent, we can receive nourishment from the scripture—the *Gītā*, the *Bhāgavatam*, other books, and the writings of Gurudeva.

Student: I am very satisfied hearing from your Divine Grace.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: I consider myself fortunate if I can render some service to you in this way.

Student (shyly): No, no, I consider myself fortunate to

sit at your feet. I cannot express my satisfaction...

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: So, I think you are genuine, a sincere person; you have connection with that which is unlimited, of infinite character. That is your fortune.

Student: I would like to ask another question if I may. In my country I have contact with a very influential man. He is the President of a Karate Association and a very expert martial artist. He likes Krishna Consciousness and wants to be a devotee, but he is not so much a brahminical type; he likes the *kṣatriya-dharma*. Also, he is attracted to mystic powers, and apparently, he has them. What is your Divine Grace's view on these things? What instruction would you give to your Mission about dealing with, or accomodating them? Perhaps you could give some advice as to how I should introduce Krishna Consciousness to this person. What would be your Divine Grace's guidance in this case, to help a person of such a nature?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Just as you have already asked, regarding the learning of *jyotisa*, astrology, so it may be in this case. It is of a very lower order to utilize physical strength to fulfill our purpose. Mahāprabhu did not accept that. When Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj's Maṭh in Mayapur, Śrī Candradoya Mandir, was attacked by a party of *guṇḍas*, gangsters, he did not oppose them with

physical force. He was inside the building at the time, and he sent a *kīrtan* party out: "Go and offer yourself as the prey of those *guṇḍas*." Those ruffians had come, entered the compound, and created some disturbance; Swāmī Mahārāj asked his devotees, "Go out and challenge them, with *kīrtan*. Without any weapons, go with the *kīrtan* party, and offer yourself as the prey of the *guṇḍas*." By that, the danger subsided. So Mahāprabhu's weapon is passive resistance. Not physical attack, offensive for offensive, but to show a passive attitude in order to conquer the offensive thing—that will be better. That is the policy of Mahāprabhu.

Sincerity of Purpose

But when that is not possible, one in a lower stage of realization can take physical help for self-protection. And sometimes, if we see that the Deity or the *vaiṣṇava* is going to be prey to the rowdies, if They are being attacked or are going to be demolished, then we are justified in using any measure to protect them: the stick, or even the gun, or any other weapon available to us. At that time, we can assert whatever force possible. But generally, such measures we may not use for ourselves; for our own protection, we depend fully on Krishna, *rakṣiṣyatīti-viśvāso:* "He will protect me." But in the case of

Vaiṣṇava, Guru, or Deity, we can assert ourselves as far as possible and with all our resources; we will be ready to give our own lives. If sincerity of purpose is there, then in extreme cases such use of physical force may be accepted. But it is a question of realization; according to one's own realization, the proper adjustment in understanding and applying these principles will come.

Connection with the Center

One must be given admission in order to enter into the Lord's family of servitors. That is dīkṣā, initiation. Through *dīkṣā*, one receives *divya-jñānam*, divine knowledge, enlightenment; he can understand, "Krishna is my Guardian, He is my all-in-all." And leaving all other duties, one promises to go towards Krishna for His service. The function of *dīkṣā* is to impart such knowledge. And the disciple himself also invites this knowledge: "I belong to Krishna, wholesale. I am His property, He can use me in any way. I am not free to leave Him; my fate is all within His service, within His area of service, and not outside."

Krishna Himself gives us this assurance: "You are My own. Your interest is My interest; My interest is your interest. We are one and the same." Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu tells Sanātan Goswāmī:

> **dīkṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa,**
> **sei-kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātma-sama**
>
> *(Cc. Antya. 4:192)*

"At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders unto the service of the Lord, Krishna accepts him to be as good as Himself."

The Lord accepts us as His own and takes the responsibility of everything for us, good and bad. And according to our surrender, such consciousness also awakens in us. *Divya-jñānam* is real knowledge; it is proper knowledge, absolute knowledge, independent of all our separate interests. From the absolute standpoint, He has got full rights over everything, including myself. From my side, I will think I am to be used by Him exclusively and by none else—this sort of transaction, is *dīkṣā*. *Divya-jñānam* or divine knowledge, means to understand this and to do accordingly. Without this, we are suffering from *avidyā*, *ajñāna*—from ignorance, from a false notion about the environment. We are ignorant of the proper estimation of the environment and ourselves.

What is the cause of this? It is separate interest. I have separate interest, and so many others also have separate interest There are many interests, not harmony in the One, central interest. This is at the root of our *ajñāna*, our ignorance. When we are conscious of the common Center,—that it is Home, it is beautiful, it is sweet, and all such things—then we get a proper esti-

mation of our connection with the Whole; we get *divya-jñāna*, real divine knowledge.

Student: What is the meaning of 'eternal relationship'? It is said that the disciple is eternally related to his guru. When one takes initiation from guru, is that relationship eternal?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: First we must understand that the very nature of our existence is of a subordinate character. The soul is of marginal potency, *taṭasthā-śakti*, and as such, no direct connection with Krishna is possible in our constitutional position. But only through some agent—through guru, the Lord's representative—are we to have His connection, and not directly. Since we are *taṭasthā-śakti*, since we come from the marginal potency, we must connect with Krishna through His internal potency. In the internal potency, all are serving the Lord eternally.

Divine Hierarchy

In that internal potency, there is gradation. There we find conceptions of personality and hierarchy: some nearer to Krishna than others. There is a hierarchy in this way, just as in a bureaucracy all are not very intimate with the king, but some are near, and others further away. The internal *śakti*, the potency of Krishna, is like

this: the nearer to the Source, the greater its intensity. Just as the heat and light is more intense near the sun. Similarly, near Krishna there is more serving spirit, and further away from Him that tendency becomes less, 2in serving, in affection, and all such attributes. Krishna's internal potency is such: the nearer to the Center there is more interest for the Center, and further away that 'Central interest' becomes a little slack. All those of the internal potency are subservient to their higher service-group; but the intensity of service-attachment may be more or less. Such hierarchy is there. And the Lord Himself is in the extreme position—He is an Autocrat. We are to adjust ourselves with such an Autocratic Center.

Key to Success

We must be prepared for anything; anything from the environment may come to us, but we are to face it with optimism. That is the key to success in our life. The highest advice is given in *Śrīmad Bhagavatam*:

> **tat te 'nukampāṁ susamīkṣamāṇo**
> **bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtam vipākam**
> **hṛd-vāg-vapurbhir vidhanam namas te**
> **jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya bhāk**
>
> *(S.Bhāg. 10:14:8)*

"One who, in the hope of achieving Your grace, tolerates all kinds of adverse conditions due to the *karma* of his past deeds and passes his days practicing devotion to You with his mind, words and body, is truly eligible for becoming your unalloyed devotee."

We have no ability to interfere with the environment; to do so will only be a useless waste of energy. Rather, we must try to correct *ourselves*, so that we can adjust with the circumstances we find surrounding us. We have been advised that the best estimation we can make about the environment is to see it and understand it as a grant. A grant means something which is given. But from where is this grant coming? It is coming from my Lord and He is my Guardian. He is Supreme; He is Autocrat. So, what is coming from Him is His grace. We are living by His grace always and it is not a matter of 'right'. That we are living and existing at all is not our birthright! Whether we exist does not matter to the Infinite Whole. So, *tat te 'nukampāṁ susamīkṣamāṇo*: whatever comes is His grace; it is not earned by my right, my ability, or my qualification. Our well-guided estimation about the environment should be such.

And we must be satisfied with whatever grant we get. It is not a matter of right; we are not to see with the

eye of any right, whether we are getting our own 'quota' or not. "Am I getting my own portion, my own share?"—this should never be our attitude. At the same time, we must try to see that whatever trouble we find is self-acquired: "Due to my own defective position, I am in such a condition. I am so low, so mean." Our vanity will have to disappear forever when we realize fully our dependence on His grace: "I have got no position; I am fully dependent on His grace. My whole existence, whole prospect, everything—it is only on account of His grace."

Krishna's Property

Mahāprabhu said, *kṛṣṇera nitya-dās*: consider yourself, know yourself, to be the slave of the Supreme Lord. A slave has got no rights; he is the property of another. The slave has no rights, but at the same time, by his master's grace, he can enter the highest place, in the highest position. Such is the prospect of the slave of the Supreme Lord Krishna.

It is possible only through service. Service means to satisfy Him, not to satisfy me. But when I am determined to exist only for Him, to maintain my existence for Him, when I can think: "I am for Him, and everything is for Him"—then I have some position. As Hegel told, "Reality is by Itself and for Itself." So everything is

for Krishna; He is for Himself, and when I am for Him, I have some position. As much as I can dedicate myself to Him, such a substantial position I may acquire. My position depends on my rendering sincere service to the Prime Cause. Mahāprabhu said:

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'taṭasthā-śakti', 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'
(Cc Madhya 20:108)

"It is the living entity's constitutional position to be an eternal servant of Krishna because he is the marginal energy of Krishna and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord, as a molecular particle of sunshine is one with and different from the sun."

The soul is of the marginal potency. From the independent standpoint, it can be seen that he has something in common with the Lord and something different from Him; such a position is inconceivable. Krishna is all-in-all, and the soul has a dependent position as His potency. The Owner is He, and if we are conscious of that fact, we can thrive. We can improve our position, and we may also get the higher position. We may enter into the most confidential service only if we can satisfy the permanent servitors of that highest conception.

Who is the highest servitor, who can serve Him best—they should be the subject of our highest reach. Our aim should be to enter into their group. And that is Rādhārāni's group. To enter into Her group, Her camp, Her association—that is *rādhā-dāsya*.

Die to Live

Service is our life; it is everything for us. We thrive only by it. Whenever we want to become a master, we deviate from that, we go away, we degrade. By serving, we live, and by trying to make ourselves master, by lording it over others, we die.

So, you will have to 'die to live'—by dying to your false ego, your self-aggrandizing tendency, you can live in the world of divine service. Everyone is trying to live in this world avoiding physical death. They are trying to 'live without death', and that of course is not possible. Just as it is not possible in the ordinary sense to live without death, so you who are aspiring for divine life, should not try to live without death! Die now! Die to both your exploiting and renouncing tendencies in order to really live in service divine.

Don't try to live in the plane of exploitation. That type of 'living' is to face death. But to die for Him, for Krishna, is to really live. The position of the Center

and our relation with the Center is such. The Hegelian theory that we should 'die to live' because 'Reality is by Itself and for Itself' is very applicable in *vaiṣṇavism*.

The Black Box

Our false ego should be dissolved, and the ego of self-searching should awake. God-searching is self-searching; to search for Krishna is really to search for our own higher interest. If you search for Krishna, your own interest is also included therein. So, only search for Krishna with the spirit of service, not with the spirit of enjoyment.

The false ego must be dissolved. *Bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiḥ*: there is a knot in the heart, and it must be cut asunder (*S.Bhāg.11:20:30*). 'Ego' means, the stored collection of separate interests of different types. Just as when an airplane has crashed, the authorities search the wreckage trying to find the 'black box', the record of the airplane's flight. Similarly, our material ego is like our black box; our 'plane' is passing through different lives, but the box is there with the recording. There we can trace from where a person is coming and to where he will go. His *karma* in its most subtle form is reserved in that recording box. There are specialists who can read if any previous birth was as a tiger, an insect, or horse or some

other species. And they can also see what the destination of any next life will be. This can all be traced in the ego.

That ego should be totally dissolved so that our soul's future destination will be in the spiritual existence and nowhere in the material world. There are so many planes of life in the universe of three dimensions: *bhūr, bhuvah, svah, maha, jana, tapa, satya-lokas*. Our goal, our destination, should not be any of them. Neither should we go to *virajā*, the area beyond all the qualities of material nature, nor to *brahmaloka*, the non-differentiated world of spiritual light. Our aim should be only: "I want to have a ticket for Goloka, for Vrindavan. I want to go there to live; I have heard, and I feel, that there is my true home, the home of my previous generations." Such feelings will come to us. When our inner self awakens we will feel, "I only want to go there." And Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu are distributing tickets to that land.

Inner Taste

The inner liking is *rucih*, taste; taste is the vital unit, not knowledge. Mahāprabhu gave recognition to the inner taste. That is our capital. That is the realm of the heart; there the brain has no function. The brain may sanction something, but the heart may take me in some other direction; in this way we are generally guided by

our heart, not by our brain. The brain cannot control everything; it may do so to a certain extent only. But the heart is the innermost guiding principle; the inner taste is guiding us toward our goal. So, we must be more concerned with that.

To improve our taste, we only need good association—association with the *sādhus*, with those who have Krishna consciousness within them. In the world of devotion it is not the brain that is valuable, but earnest, sincere hankering for Krishna. And Krishna is Reality the Beautiful. But He is also an Autocrat; that must also be our consideration, that the highest cannot be subservient to anything. This is clear and reasonable because Krishna holds the highest position. He should not be dependent on any other thing. And yet, He is dependent only on those who have that very conception about Him—that He is the highest. With them, naturally 'oneness' is there—the common interest binds them together. There is binding, attraction—the Attractor and the attracted. And Krishna is all-attracting.

Safe Position

There is Krishna and His own. When we have some connection with a real devotee of Krishna we have a tangible position. Otherwise, we are nowhere; we are

lost in the infinite. But whenever we come in contact with a devotee, with an agent of His who is moving here in this world for His interest, then we have found some substantial position.

brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā bīja
(Cc Madhya 19:151)

"Wandering throughout the material universe, the very fortunate living entity who receives the grace of guru and Krishna receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service."

We are wandering endlessly in this universe. When we come in connection with a devotee of Krishna, then we get some hope, some support, some safe position.

Untraceable Position

Without such substantial connection, we are lost in infinity. All our movement here—from where we have come, to where we are going, what we are doing—is going on endlessly, but to no point, to no good. When connected with local interest, such movement has no value in relation to the Infinite, the interest of the Center. It is like a ball being kicked: with one kick the ball is running in one direction, with another

kick it is going a different way. Kicked from different directions it is going now this side, now that. Our position is like that: a ball being kicked. But when we come to have association with one who has got some substantial connection with the real Center, then we have acquired some tangible position; we are counted within the calculation from the Center; we have got some position there; we are traceable. Otherwise, we are nowhere. We have no position. Our position is untraceable. We are wandering, passing through the universe in such a way.

Which Brahma

This is the position of all souls within the universe. From this viewpoint even Brahmā, the creator of this material world, has no tangible position. The position of guru Brahmā, of Brahmā in his function as guru, has a different consideration, but Brahmā in his general function as the creator of any solar system may not have any tangible position in the universal calculation.

When Brahmā first approached Krishna, Krishna sent His servant to ask, "Which Brahmā has come?" And Brahmā thought, "What is this? Is there any other Brahmā? I am all-in-all, the creator of all and everything, whatever we see, we feel." Still, he had to tell

Krishna, through His servant, "It is the four-headed Brahmā, father of Sanaka, who has come to meet You." Then he was taken inside the hall, and He was filled with wonder at what he saw there: "Oh, so many Brahmās are here! Hundred-faced, thousand-faced, million-faced Brahmās are here, and with their big and gorgeous figures they are commanding bigger, greater universes than me. The creators of so many greater solar systems are here!" He was astonished.

Plane of Love

The Infinite can accomodate everything. We are to make some tangible connection with that Infinite; we are to find some substantial position in relation to Him. But what direction will we take to go there? How are we to make such progress? It is only through love and affection.

Affection is beyond calculation; it exists in a plane beyond calculation. It is that force which is controlling without the need of any brain; a kind of intuition. The affection of the mother for the child is found everywhere, even in the birds, beasts, and insects. The parent bird comes with some intuitive affection for the fledglings when they are growing to feed and nurture them. Then she goes away. In this way the intuitive force of affection is going on to conduct the world's affairs. It is unac-

countable; we do not know from where it comes, but it comes to do its service and disappears. That sort of tendency comes from the area of affection, of love. And we are to take shelter under that wave, wherever we find it available. That can help us as we are wandering throughout the creation.

Satanic Brain

The human brain, when misdirected, is going to destroy the whole world by inventing atomic energy! The discovery of atomic energy is for mass destruction. We are so 'civilized' on the negative side. But civilization on the negative side is suicidal. To kill one another—is such civilization a development? Should we call this improvement? It is rather the product of the satanic brain. Satan is not a desirable thing; it is an indirect, undesirable force. Killing, destroying, destruction is satanic activity. Those of such satanic brains are agents of destruction.

But the constructive elements are affection, love, sincerity, self-giving, and surrendering. All these are based on surrender; love is always based on surrender. And that high thing, that noble thing, we shall try to imbibe. The most noble thing is self-giving. To give is nobleness; to assert, to exploit, is satanic. And to surrender for higher things is godly.

Further, Mahāprabhu also said, "Who are you to give? Already you belong to Him. And how do you belong to Him? Not by any contact, but by your nature. You are a servant. You are *kṛṣṇa-dās*, a slave of Krishna. By your very existence, you are subservient to Him. And you want the opposite thing: you want to become a Krishna, a God? You want to take His position? Your aspiration is just the opposite, and because you cannot thrive in this attempt, because you cannot become that Krishna, then you want to commit suicide, to enter the renunciation zone; you want liberation, *mukti*. You want to enter eternal slumber, *samādhi, brahma-sāyujya*—all these unnatural things. But come forward in the natural way, knowing that you are a servant, and in that position you will thrive." This is Mahāprabhu's advice.

A Noble Life

We are so accustomed to satisfying our interests in the world of exploitation that we cannot think that we live by serving. By dying to our concocted self as an exploiter, we can live: this very thing we can't understand. By giving we get, we thrive, and by taking we go down, we lose. But we are so conditioned with the thought of the opposite thing that by gathering everything for ourselves we will be unable to think how it is possible that by

giving ourselves we can be greater. But the solution is in that very thing: we must 'die to live'.

bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiś,
chidyante sarva saṁśayāḥ
kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi,
dṛṣṭe khilātmani
(S.Bhāg. 11:20:30)

"When the soul directly beholds Me as the Supreme Soul within all souls, the knot of mundane ego in the heart is pierced, all his doubts are destroyed, and the chain of fruitive actions is annihilated."

When our whole 'separate-interest-box' is dissolved, we will find a common interest with our Lord. We will feel, "My interest is one with His, and I am to do my duty according to my might." That is the normal life in relation to the Organic Whole.

Proper Adjustment

The attempt to properly adjust ourselves is also very important in striving to arrive at the conclusion of our life's purpose. We must consider: "How are we to utilize ourselves?" We are presently in a perplexed condition, and perplexity means dissatisfaction with our present circumstances. How do I find out how I can be utilized

in the service of the Lord? This requires proper adjustment from us.

If the Lord says to us, "Take your seat here," but I want to run hither and thither for some other services, and still the Lord says "No, you stay here, sit here, by my side." What should we do? Should we sit, or say, "No, I want to do some work?" We will have to sit as He has asked, to satisfy Him.

Yet, this is also one kind of temperament of a devotee: "I can't sit idly by Your side, some sort of service must be given to me." That also is not to be rejected in every case. The main principle is that with good connection, everything may be good. It is the connection which is all-important: Krishna's connection, Krishna consciousness. In different ways, different persons may go on with their service. It is not that everything must be stale or stereotyped.

Deeper Aspiration

Our sincere attitude for the truth is all-important. Our searching mood—*kṛṣṇānusandhan*, to search for Krishna and none else—such a temperament is very valuable. "I am not satisfied by so many things, but my heart is aching for Him. I have heard from many sources about Krishna; I want to be very near to Him."

Then, to be nearer to His devotees is still more tangible and real. When we have some practical faith in the association of His real servitors, then we acquire something substantial in our path of progress. By Him, that association is made possible and available for our help. So the position of one who has abstract attraction for Krishna is considered to be primary; but one who has aspiration for Krishna's servants, rather than for Krishna Himself, is in a better position.

īśvare tad-adhīnesu,
balīśeṣu dviṣatsu ca
prema-maitrī-kṛpopekṣā,
yaḥ karoti sa madhyamaḥ
(S.Bhāg. 11:2:46)

"The devotee in the intermediate stage of devotional service is called a *madhyāma-adhikārī*. He loves the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a sincere friend to all the devotees of the Lord, shows mercy to the innocent, and disregards the envious."

arcāyām eva haraye,
pūjāṁ yah śraddhayehate
na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu,
sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ
(S.Bhāg. 11:2:47)

"A devotee who faithfully worships the Deity, but does not properly respect the *vaiṣṇava*s or the people in general, is called a materialistic devotee and is considered to be in the lowest position of devotional service."

The beginners in devotion want Krishna and not His devotees, but those who have some tendency to attain friendship and association with the devotees of Krishna have something tangible, something real. That is a higher position because by such aspiration one's real spiritual life is insured. *Na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu, sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ*—those who are practizing devotion, who want to cultivate Krishna consciousness through worship of the *arcā-mūrti*, the Deity, through reading books, or in any other way, but who are avoiding the bona-fide servitors of the Lord, are in the ordinary, primary stage. But when some practical sympathy is felt in the heart for Krishna's devotees, that fortunate person has got something tangible in their life, and their position is more reliable, safe, and progressive.

Only Krishna

When nothing but the Krishna conception can satisfy the devotee—when all the waves coming to him from every direction, whether good or bad, are connected with Krishna—then his position is better still. To the

devotee in that stage, good and bad are both good because he sees everything as connected with the Center.

For example, it may happen that a devotee leaves the Mission and the devotional association. By his good fortune, he came to connect with the Mission, but now he is going away; such a circumstance is an unfortunate thing. And another devotee whose heart is pained to see such a bad or unfortunate circumstance, is in a bona-fide position. His heart is aching for that man who has fallen from Krishna consciousness; so, despite the unpleasant circumstances, his position is good. And conversely, when so many are coming to preach Krishna consciousness, carrying the flag of Mahāprabhu from corner to corner of this world, that same devotee's heart is feeling pleasure, and that is all good. So in Krishna consciousness, both good and bad are good. Anything relating to Krishna consciousness—good or bad, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, but all concerning Krishna—is good.

The Greatness of the Vaisnava

Question: On the path of devotional service, how is one to improve his own condition?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Through superior association. In business, if you want something but you have insufficient capital to purchase it, you can join with a greater capitalist and your business will develop. Similarly, if you want to improve your condition in Krishna consciousness, find a 'capitalist'; on your own you may not gain so much, but with their help, you can advance more quickly.

Essential Principle

Help is of two kinds: from *sādhu* and *śāstra*, from saints and scriptures. The living agent is *sādhu*, and the passive, *śāstra*. There is no other way to improve but by *sādhu-śāstra-kṛpā*—by their mercy.

kṛṣṇa-bhakti-janma mūla haya 'sādhu-saṅgha'
kṛṣṇa-prema janme, teṅho punaḥ mukhya aṅga

(Cc. Madhya 22:83)

The very beginning of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, devotional service, is association—the help of the *sādhu*. And in the higher stage, when your dormant love for Krishna awakens, that association is still the most essential principle to help you. The birth of devotion is from there; its nourishment is also from there; and at the end, when you have almost attained the final stage, then also, with the help of some superior you are to continue your service. So, the *sādhu* is all-important, from the beginning to the final goal. At the final stage also, no direct connection with Krishna is admissible but you are to do some service only under the direction of the *sādhus*. The eternal servitors are there, in different departments of service, and you will be taken in and directed: "Serve Krishna under *his* direction, or *her* direction." So, *sādhu-saṅgha* is always necessary.

Telescopic System

Do not have disgust towards the *sādhu*, thinking: "Oh, he's just a man—why should we do service to him, why should we do *vaiṣṇava-sevā*? Why is it recommended so much in different scriptures? It is always said, 'You are to be dependent on *sādhu*'; but I want God Himself! Why will he come between me and God?" Do not think

like that. Rather, you can understand the importance of the *sādhu* by the example of the telescope. In a telescope there are so many lenses coming between myself and the object of my search, but they help my vision. The *guru-paramparā*, the disciplic succession, is working in this way, like a 'telescopic system'.

The devotees' aspiration therefore is *dāsa-dāsa-dāsa-anudāsa, tad dāsa-dāsa*, to be the servant of the servant of the servant of Krishna's servant's servant. His understanding will be: "There are so many gurus, and they are thinking about my welfare." To have so many gurus means that so many guardians are always trying for my fortune.

We find in this world that a man who has many servants always waiting on his order thinks he is holding a very good position. But in the case of a devotee it is just the opposite. He will think that if he has so many gurus, so many guardians looking after his welfare, then he is really a wealthy man: "I am fortunate when so many guardians are looking out for me and are pleading my case on the upper level." To have a connection with the *guru-paramparā* to be servant of the servant, to be under the guardianship of the great *vaiṣṇava*s, is a great fortune. It is a fortunate life.

Be Careful

For the beginner, faith in the *vaiṣṇava* is not apparent. The newcomer in devotion says, "I want Bhagavan, God, Krishna. Why is the impression always given to us, "Oh, you must get the *kṛpā*, the mercy, of a *vaiṣṇava*; you must get his blessing. You must go to him to have your fortune? Why this tedious thing, that the *vaiṣṇava* is always coming between Bhagavan and myself?" But when the aspirant is grown up, his faith in the *vaiṣṇava* becomes more established. Ultimately, even our attention to the *vigrahā*, the Deity, and the *śāstra*, the Scripture, may leave, but we must always submit to the *vaiṣṇava*, the Lord's living agent.

So the first cause of *nāma-aparādha* is offense to the *vaiṣṇava*:

satāṁ nindā nāmnaḥ paramam aparādhaṁ vitanute
yataḥ khyātiṁ yataṁ katham u sahate tad-vigarhām
(Śrī Padma Purāna)

"To blaspheme the saintly persons who are engaged in preaching the glories of the Hare Krishna *mahā-mantra* is the worst offense at the lotus feet of the Holy Name. Nāma Prabhu, who is identical with Krishna, will never tolerate such blasphemous activities, even from one who passes as a great devotee."

While taking the Name, especially in the beginning of spiritual practice, the first warning is this: "Be careful in your association with the *sādhus*. They are truly your utmost well-wishers, the agents who are carrying good to you. So be very alert not to commit any wrong against them. Don't misunderstand them; try to have faith in them. Their goodness is beyond your understanding. They love you so much. You cannot love yourself as much as they do, because they see you as the property of their Lord. From that standpoint they love you; and that love is very high, in quality and quantity. So be very careful; don't commit any wrong against the *sādhu*—you must always remember this."

yadi vaiṣṇava-aparādha uṭhe hātī mātā
upāḍe vā ciṇḍe, tāra sūkhi yāya pātā
(Cc. Madhya 19:156)

"If the devotee commits offense to the *vaiṣṇava* while cultivating the creeper of devotion, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper become dried up."

If a great crime is committed against the *sādhu*, the *vaiṣṇava*, then the whole of the offender's devotional life will be demolished. The Lord will be enraged with

him: "My devotee is going to give him all wealth, and he is kicking him? What is this? He is the most wretched." So we must be careful about this offense of *satāṁ-nindā* the first *nāma-aparādha*: offense to the Holy Name.

Merciful Nitai

Still we see that Nityānanda Prabhu is the most merciful, even to the offenders. His nature is of a peculiar type, such that whom even Mahāprabhu is rejecting, He is keeping, giving assurance: "No, no, don't be hopeless." Nityananda Prabhu's mercy was shown in this way in the pastime of Mahāprabhu and Kālā-Krishna dās.

Kālā-Krishnadās was accompanying Mahāprabhu on His journey in South India, and there he did something wrong. He left Mahāprabhu's personal association, enticed by the Bhaṭṭathāris, the gypsy women. This occurred in the south, Kerala-Karnataka, the place of Madhvācārya. The people of that province, both men and women, are reputed to be very beautiful. Their complexion is very good, as well as their features and their figures; Gandhi referred to that place as the 'land of the fairies'. Kālā-Krishnadās was enticed, and left Mahāprabhu's association. That even in the direct company of Mahāprabhu, Kālā-Krishnadās was deviated is certainly for our instruction. But utilizing His special power, Mahāprabhu rescued

Kālā-Krishnadās from the gypsy' camp. Later, after taking him to Jagannāth Purī, Mahāprabhu released him from His service, saying, "He is of such a nature; but, anyhow, I have taken him from the hands of those villifiers. Now I release him; he may go anywhere." But Nityānanda Prabhu utilized Kālā-Krishnadās, again giving him service: "Go to Śacī Devī and inform her that Mahāprabhu has arrived in Puri safely after two years of touring in the south country. Give news of Mahāprabhu's safe arrival to Śacī Devī." Despite Mahāprabhu's rejection, still Kālā-Krishnadās was utilized, by Nityānanda Prabhu.

Wait and See

I remember a similar case when I was preaching in Madras. Hayagrīva brahmacārī—later he became Śrīpād Mādhava Mahārāj—and I were preaching there, and we sent one boy to the Madras Center of Gaudiya Maṭh. He was staying there and serving as a *brahmacārī*, but then he became misguided. Śrīpād B.P. Tīrtha Mahārāj, who was at that time quite elderly, was in charge of the Maṭh there, and he punished that fallen *brahmacārī* by sending him away from the Maṭh. He managed to stay in some other place in the city, but then, after Śrīpād Tīrtha Mahārāj had left Madras, that boy came to Hayagrīva

and I pleading: "You please give permission to let me stay in the Maṭh." We told him, "Guru Mahārāj is very soon coming here; come at that time." Then when Guru Mahārāj came to officially open the new lecture hall we put the case to him: "This boy came for service, but then he had to leave for such a reason; but now again he wants to stay in the Maṭh. What should we do with him?"

Extension of Grace

Then our Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur, said: "Mahāprabhu did not take Kālā-Krishnadās after he was seduced when the Bhaṭṭatharis showed him a lady. So, I can't accept him. But Nityānanda Prabhu kept him and gave him engagement. So *you* should keep him." A peculiar position we then found ourselves in! I thought: "Gurudev, you are all-in-all our leader, our unconditional Lord; *you* can't accept him, then how can *we* give him shelter, being under your guidance?" That was a puzzle: "How can we do it? If *you* can't accept, then how can we?" But Guru Mahārāj has said, "I can't accept him; but *you* should keep him." And we had to adjust to that.

From this we can trace the line of benevolence and causeless mercy. The line of causeless mercy is extending

from the Center, but the extension gets the more intense position: "take yourself to the mercy department; perhaps, there is some arrangement to help, to accept you." Just as in a hospital, the general department disappoints the patient: "No, we can't accept such patients as you here. But, you may try the other department. There, you will find more accomodation." And after going there and checking, the patient finds them to be of such type: "Here we can accept all. There is arrangement for you." In this way we find the servants are more benevolent even more than their Lord. It is inconceivable.

Love and Abuse

In seeing the mood of humility as expressed in different ways by Krishnadās Kavirāj Goswāmī and Vṛndāvan Dās Ṭhākur, I also came to some revolutionary understanding about this.

While writing Śrī *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, Kavirāj Goswāmī expressed humility of such a degree that he says, "My position is the worst; I am a sinner far worse than Jagāi and Mādhāi; I am lower than the worm in the stool. If anyone hears my name, his merit will be diminished; if anyone speaks my name, he commits sin—such a wretched person I am. But the grace of Nityānanda Prabhu has taken me up from such a nasty pit, taken

me to Rūpa-Sanātana, to Raghunātha Dās, and to divine Vrindavan. I should not proclaim this; I should not speak in such a way, that 'I have got something'—but if I do *not* say so, then it will show ingratitude to Nityānanda Prabhu. I would be a traitor to Him. So I shall have to say, 'I have got something,' and that is by the grace of Nityananda. It is all His property, His grace; otherwise, there is no worth at all in me."

With so much humility Kavirāj Goswāmī approached the public and appealed to them to come to Gaura-Nityānanda. But Vrindavan Dās Ṭhākur , in his writing, says, "I appeal most fervently and with the greatest humility to you all: accept Nityānanda and Sri Gaurāṅga! You'll get the best benefit of your life. This I urgently beg you, with the utmost humility, with a straw between my teeth. But if such appeal of mine fails, and if still you want to put blame on Nityānanda-Gaurāṇga, then I just kick you! I kick such a demoniac person."

eta parihāreo je pāpi nindā kare
tabe lāthi māron tara śirera upare
(C. Bhag. Madhya 11:63)

"If in spite of hearing the glories of Nityānanda, one blasphemes Him, then I kick the head of such a sinful person."

To this, the ordinary commentators will say, "Kavirāj Goswāmī and others are humiliating themselves so much. They are appealing in such a humble way. But this Vṛndāvan Dās! What kind of egoistic fellow is he? He says he kicks those who do not come to hear his Gaura-Nityānanda. He'll kick them! Such a boast, so proud, is he a *vaiṣṇava*? Is this type of person a *vaiṣṇava*? *Tṛnad api sunīcena, taror api sahiṣṇunā*: more humble than straw, more tolerant than a tree—is he of this type?"

A New Path

This is how Vṛndāvandās Ṭhākur's statement is met by the ordinary thinkers; but not long after joining the Gaudiya Maṭh, I heard a revolutionary remark from our Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur, in which we find a most peculiar explanation. He said: "For those who had no chance, no possibility of entering into devotional service, Vṛndāvan Dās Ṭhākur has created a path by this statement. For those who had no chance of getting any service, Vṛndāvan Dās Ṭhākur has given that chance, by kicking them." How is it so? Guru Mahārāj explained, "Vṛndāvan Dās Ṭhākur has pronounced such a bold expression against those unbelieving persons to wound their feelings so that Krishna will come to their aid. Just as if the son of a gentleman

does wrong to some other person, then the gentleman will come to help: "Oh, what he has done to you, don't mind it; look here, I am giving something to you—be pleased and go on happily." So, because Vṛndāvan Dās Ṭhākur has in such an ostentatious way apparently committed some wrong against that particular unbelieving section, it will draw Krishna's attention; Mahāprabhu's special attention will be drawn towards them: "My son has done some damage to you; don't take it badly, but forgive and forget—now I am giving something to you, come."

In this way, Vṛndāvan Dās Ṭhākur has made a new path by threatening the unbelievers in Gaura-Nityānanda. By his strong remark of a very abusive character, he has given the chance to those fellows to draw the greater and more special attention of the authority.

Imbued with Krishna

But this kind of statement, as we see given by Vṛndāvan Dās Ṭhākur, can come only from the fully surrendered soul. One who is fully surrendered to Krishna can say such things.

Krishna is the Absolute Good, and everything in the soul that is fully surrendered to Krishna, everything in the pure *vaiṣṇava*, cannot but be goodness. Just as iron when

put into the fire becomes of the nature of fire, so the fully surrendered soul is imbued with Krishna in every part.

sarva mahā-guṇa-gaṇa vaiṣṇava-śarīre
kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇera guṇa sakali sañcāre
(Cc Madhya 22:75)

"A *vaiṣṇava* is one who has developed all good transcendental qualities. All the good qualities of Krishna gradually develop in Krishna's devotee."

Every part of a pure *vaiṣṇava*—his wrath, his abusing, everything in him—is pure and good. Whether by his blessing or his curse, through him Krishna is giving something. Nalakuvara and Maṇigrīva were cursed by Ṛṣi Nārada to become trees, but that misfortune was managed in such a way that they came to be born in Vrindavan, so that when their tree-form would be uprooted by Krishna, they would get the chance to go to Goloka for their eternal service.

So any connection with a *vaiṣṇava* is able to give such an ultimately beneficial result. But that does not mean that we shall deliberately go to offend him! It is not meant like that, and we should not take it in that way. To do so would be inconsistent with the meaning; it would be suicidal.

Affection the Controller

The Lord Himself says, *ahaṁ bhakta-parādhino asvatantra iva dvija*: "I am dependent on My devotees." This was told by Lord Nārāyaṇa to Durvāsā Muni in the case of Ambarīsa Mahārāj. Through affection, the infinitesimal *jīva*-soul, by constitution the Lord's potency and fully dependent on Him, can conquer or control his Possessor, his Lord.

We find that the law of affection is such. In Indian families, the mother formally has nothing; she has no property, no right; but she commands reverence and a high respect, and through this, she holds a superior position even to that of the father. The father holds the property; the mother holds no such property, no such formal right, but she has 'social right,' and through it she holds the greatest respect of the children. There is a popular *śloka* which says that the father is considered 'higher than the heaven,' and the mother, 'higher than the land where we stand.' It is also said, and we see, that both the mother and the father help to raise the children, but in that the mother's quota is far greater than the father; so her dignity, her superiority, is much greater than his. This is the custom in *varṇāśrama-dharma*: the mother has no legal possession, but she has social or moral possession.

Durvasa and Ambarisa

When Durvāsā Muni ran to Lord Nārāyaṇa for shelter, being chased by the *sudarśana cakra* due to his offense against Ambarīṣa Mahārāj, Lord Nārāyaṇa told him:

ahaṁ bhakta-paradhino,
hy asvatantra iva dvija
sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo,
bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyaḥ
(S.Bhāg 9:4:63)

"I am dependent on My devotees. O you brāhmin, I am not at all independent of them—I am dependent on them, as if I have no freedom of My own. Yes, freedom I have, but through My devotees' affection, I am reduced to such a position that it is as if I have none. In the case of My devotees I cannot but be partial. My independent thinking has no place there, so much indebted I think I am to them. *Sādhubhir grasta-hṛ dayo*: My whole heart has been 'swallowed' by them, those saints, devotees. They have swallowed Me, and I may not have any independent thinking, but only their interest at heart. By their service they have acquired such a position with Me."

Such an admission is a wonderful thing! Durvāsā

Muni wanted impartial judgement from the Lord: "I am a *brāhmana*; Ambarīṣa is a *kṣatriya*; I am a *sannyāsi*; he is a *gṛhasta* in household life. So my prestige is above him. And You are '*Brāhmaṇya-Deva*.' You are supposed to be the supporter of the *brāhmaṇas*. So I have a claim to You, that You must make a fair judgement in this case." Lord Brahmā and Mahādeva Śiva had both frustrated Durvāsā: "Go to Nārāyaṇa, we can't do anything in this matter; we can't interfere." Then Durvāsā had to approach Nārāyaṇa for shelter. And Nārāyaṇa replied: *ahaṁ bhakta parādhino*, "I am helpless; I am dependent on My devotees!"

Narayana's Stricture

But Nārāyaṇa also made a good argument to Durvāsā "Yes, you are a *brāhmaṇa*; but Ambarīṣa was also observing the *Ekādaśī-vrata*, which is connected with Me. You observed that same vow, it is true, and you also knew, like him, that the *pāraṇa*, the time for breaking the fast, is a part of that vow. Then what wrong did Ambarīṣa do? What was his fault? Only in order to observe, to give respect to the vow, he did *pāraṇa* in your absence. And you also did *pāraṇa* on time; but you are his guest, so he only took a drop of water to observe the indispensable part of the vow. He

only took a drop of water; he did not feed himself without feeding you— and you were enraged with him? What he did, in his observance of the vow, he only did it for Me. And that disturbed you. You say that you are more akin to Me than Ambarīṣa? The difference between you two arose where? You both acted in observance of My vow—and he was at fault? What reason is there? Who is nearer to Me, you or he?"

"You say that you are a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī*, that you are all these great things, and that you have the higher position. But when you went to burn him with that *jaṭam*, that fire-demon created from the hair you plucked from your head, Ambarīṣa did not step back. He did not run to save his life. But when Sudarśana came to attack you,—*brāhmaṇa, sannyāsī*— you were running through the whole universe to save your life. Then, who is *sannyāsī*, you or he? When faced with the fire, he did not budge an inch to save his life. He stood, with the attitude: "If I have done anything wrong, let my life be finished." But you ran everywhere: to Brahmā, to Śiva. Finally you came here fearing for your life. Then whose renunciation is superior?"

In this way Durvāsā was given stricture; he was rebuked, chastised, by Lord Nārāyaṇa.

The Greatness of the Vaisnava

Then Lord Nārāyaṇa told Durvāsā, "You will have to go back to Ambarīṣa. I cannot give any judgement against My devotee. He will give judgement in this case. Go to him, and see how generous he is." What was Durvāsā to do? He had to come before his opponent for judgement of his case. He found Ambarīṣa still standing in the same spot, mortified: "The *brāhmaṇa* is troubled on my account, and he is my guest. Some accident happened in such a way that Sudarśana chased him, and he is running in every direction. But, he is my guest; without feeding him, how can I take food?" In this way Ambarīṣa was standing there in a mournful condition: "It is bad luck for me, that when my guest is waiting I could not feed him as is proper. How can I take food when my honored guest is disturbed and running this way and that? How can I?"

Just as he was thinking this, Durvāsā appeared, chased by Sudarśana: "Mahārāj, save me! There is no other savior in this world for me except you. I have come to you. Please, save me!"

Then Ambarīṣa began to pacify Sudarśana. He prayed: "If for a single day I have done any devoted activity for Nārāyaṇa, Oh Sudarśana, please pacify yourself. This

brāhmaṇa is my honorable guest, and I cannot tolerate that you will disturb him in my presence. Please, stop." So Sudarśana had to withdraw, and Durvāsā was saved. Then Durvāsā was fed as the guest of Ambarīṣa. And, astonished by the magnanimity of Ambarīṣa, Durvāsā announced:

aho ananta-dāsānāṁ,
mahattvaṁ dṛṣṭam adya me
kṛtāgaso 'pi yad rājan,
maṅgalāni samīhase
(S.Bhāg. 9:5:14)

"O King, today I have experienced the greatness of the devotees of God, of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because in spite of my offense against you, you have prayed for my protection."

Durvāsā was astounded to find the depth of generosity in the servitors of Ananta, Nārāyaṇa. That great *ṛṣi* began to speak aloud, to announce on all sides the magnanimity, the nobility of the servitors of Narayana: "How great they are! I did so much wrong towards him, and he saved my life from the danger that came as a reaction! I insulted him, and he is honoring me so much."

So for one who has nothing, who thinks that he is not an independent entity but a slave, fully dependent

on the Absolute, for him the Absolute has the proper recognition.

Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself sent Durvāsā to be judged by Ambarīṣa, His devotee. Brahmā failed, Mahādeva failed, and Nārāyaṇa Himself admitted: "I also failed; I could not do anything independent of you, My devotee. You are *the* judge." The Lord makes the highest judge His devotee, His servant. We find it is like this.

Gradations of Theism

Sudent: Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, could you explain in essence the differences between the teachings of the four *vaiṣṇava* sampradāyas?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: This has been given in detail in the Gaudiya-patrika, the weekly paper published during our Guru Mahārāj's time; here I am giving only the summary to you.

Nimbārka's teaching is known as '*dvaitādvaita*', Madhvācāya's as '*śudha-dvaita*', Viṣnuswāmī's as '*śuddhād-vaita*', and Rāmānuja's as '*viśiṣṭādvaita*'.

Rāmānuja's *sampradāya* is known as Śrī *sampradāya*; it is coming from Śrī Laxmi Devī; Madhvācārya's *sampradāya* is coming from Lord Brahmā; Rudra or Śiva, is the source of the Visnuswami ll, and Nimbarka's *sampradāya* stems from Catuḥsana, the four Kumāras.

Śrīdhar Swāmī, the renowned commentator of Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, belongs to the teachings of *sudhādvaita*. And the Vallabha *sampradāya* also branches from there.

In the teachings of the Nimbārka *sampradāya*, known as *dvaitādvaitavād*, both difference (*dvaita*) and oneness

(*advaita*) between The Lord and His energies are accepted, but that is not qualified as *acintya*, inconceivable. Mahāprabhu's philosophy is also of '*bhedābheda*', oneness and difference, but the necessary qualification is given: '*acintya*'. The demarcation between the two—the oneness and the difference—is not in the hand of anybody; it is reserved with the Lord. Whatever exists, exists as both common with and different from the Absolute. But that is not a rigid thing; it depends on Him—He can change the line of demarcation anytime, anywhere. The line of demarcation is *acintya*: where that may be, or may not be the same everytime. It depends on the sweet will of the Ultimate Reality. So, Nimbārka's' '*dvaitādvaita*' is very akin to Mahāprabhu's '*acintya-bhedābheda*' though with this difference.

Another distinction is that though the object of worship in Nimbārka's line is Rādhā-Krishna, and up to *mādhura-rasa*, they do not accept the play of *parakīya-bhāva*, paramour love. The difference between the Nimbārka and Gaudiya *sampradāya* is here: the acceptance of *parakīyā*, such as is shown in the *madhyāhna-līlā*, the noontime pastimes of Rādhā and Krishna.

Arcana and Seva

The Nimbārkas also are more concerned with *arcana*, or *pujā*, worship, performed strictly according to the scriptures. The *viddhi*—the law, rules and regulations—is principal to them. But in Gaudiya *sampradāya*, the strictness of the *viddhi* is a little slackened, with affection and love having the better part.

Such a mood of affectionate worship is also in the Vallabha *sampradāya*, the line of *śuddhādvaita*. They do not even like to use the word '*arcana*', but they say '*sevā*' as we do. We speak of *sevā*, that is, *rāga-mārga*: with affection we shall serve, not according to the strict, scriptural rules. The Vallabha sampradāya, the followers of Viṣṇuswāmī, have this in common with us.

And there is also the 'Rāmānandi' *sampradāya*, which though springing from the Rāmānuja *sampradāya*, is another deviation because we find in Rāmānanda himself, and later in Tulasī Dās, a greater rigidity in asceticism. Asceticism has a bigger part for them, including the tendency towards salvation, liberation, *mokṣa*.

Interpretation of Vedanta

The four *sampradāyas* also have their respective *bhāsyas*, commentaries, on Vedānta. Nimbārka has his

Parijāta-bhāsya; Madhvācārya has his *bhāsya*; Rāmānuja has his own commentary, *Śrī-bhāsya*; and Viṣṇuswamī also has his *bhāsya*, followed by Śrīdhar Swāmī. The Gaudiya *sampradāya* has its own commentary, *Govinda-bhāsya*. These are different types of interpretations of Vedānta, *Brahmā-sutra*. These four, and their branches, are all theistic.

There is also Śaṅkarācārya's commentary; that we call atheistic because it does not accept the *jīva* soul in it's highest position of eternal service to Krishna. This is similar to the conclusion of Buddha, who says that with the dissolution of the mental body, everything ends. This is what Śaṅkarācārya also says, ultimately: the individual conception of soul is imaginary; it only remains so long as one is in misunderstanding. When misunderstanding is cleared, one gets liberation and no individual soul remains, but a mass of light, and that is *brahma*, some non-differentiated, non-specified substance. But unlike Buddha, Śaṅkara says that such substance is made of consciousness.

According to Śaṅkara, *māyā* or misconception has no beginning, but it does not go on forever; it may be ended. We can get out of *māyā*; it may be fully quenched, stopped. So, it is *anādi-sānta*, without beginning but temporary; only *brahma* is *anādi-ananta*, without beginning or end.

Sankara and Buddha

The *vaiṣṇavavites* say that Śaṇkara is 'Buddhist in disguise'. The Buddhist does not have any recognition of the eternity of the individual *jīva* soul, and Śaṅkara's conception is also like that—no eternal *jīva* soul. Their difference is that Buddha had no recognition of the revealed scriptures, whereas Śaṅkara accepted them, but while explaining them, he gave his concocted, imaginary interpretation, and the Buddhist opinion has been hidden inside that. The atheistic doctrine of the Buddhists is still kept in Śaṅkara's teaching, though under the guise of acceptance of the Veda. In this way Śaṅkara's doctrine is more dangerous than that of the Buddhist.

While instructing Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, Mahāprabhu told him:

> **veda nā māniyā bauddha haya ta' nāstika**
> **vedāśraya nāstikya-vāda bauddhake adhika**
> *(Cc Madhya 6:168)*

"The Buddhists do not recognize the authority of the Vedas; therefore, they are considered agnostics. However, those who have taken shelter of the Vedic scriptures yet preach agnosticism in accordance with the Māyāvāda philosophy are certainly more dangerous than the Buddhists."

The Buddhists are clear: "We don't have any recognition of the revealed scriptures, we are of another opinion—our attempt is based on reasoning." But Śaṅkara, though accepting the revealed scriptures, puts his own interpretation into them.

Eternal Soul

Still, neither Buddha nor Śaṅkara recognize the eternity of the individual *jīva* soul, as it is expressed in Bhagavad-gītā: *ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo*—"The soul is eternal, ever-existing, ever-youthful, yet ancient" (B.gita, 2:20). And: *jīva-bhutah sanātanah*—"The conditioned souls are eternal" (B.gītā,15:7). Also, it is stated in the Upaniṣads: *nityo-nityānām cetanaś cetanānām, eko bahunāṁ* (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2:2:13).

Here it is said, *"nityo-nityānām"*: there is one Supreme Eternal amongst many of eternal substance. There are many eternal entities (*bahunām*), and He is the principal among them.

In the Upaniṣads, in Bhagavad-gītā, everywhere in the revealed scriptures it is admitted that the *jīva* is *nitya*: the soul is immortal. According to Śaṅkara, however, the soul is ultimately mortal. Through transmigration one will have to accept different bodies according to *karma*, but ultimately, after liberation, any *jīva*, individual soul,

does not exist, and neither does God. Only *brahma* exists, a non-differentiated mass of spiritual substance made of consciousness.

Buddha had no recognition of that substance as light; Buddhists say some force of nature, *prakṛti*, exists, and different manifestations of this force are acting together, producing everything. When that combination is dissolved, what remains is something indescribable—it may or may not be a kind of force, it is undifferentiated, indescribable. That is *virajā, prakṛti-nirvāṇa*, attained when the individual spirit of exploitation disappears into the non-differentiated plane.

Student: Why is it that Śaṅkara's philosophy has so much appeal to people in general?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: It is a compromise; it apparently gives harmony to all the sections of worshipers of different types of gods. There are so many worshipers of so many gods; and Śaṅkara harmonizes them: "What you are doing, is alright—you are worshiping Kālī, or Gaṇeśa, or Sūrya, or Agni, or Viṣṇu—all is good, I accept all. That is only for the time being and to a certain extent. But finally, your attempt will end in the attainment of *brahma*. If you can accept this as the final end, I accept you all." Because of this compromise, Śaṅkara's thought is widely accepted by the atheistic section; you

can understand it in this way.

As I have mentioned, Śaṅkara showed the color of accepting the Veda and Upaniṣad, but he gave this sort of meaning, that everything ends in *brahma*. Through that, he apparently harmonized and embraced them all.

Another thing which contributed to his popularity was that he was brilliant, an intellectual giant, and he fought against the Buddhist thinkers who were out-and-out atheists; with the color of theism he fought against the number one atheist, the Buddhist. And his success in that gave him much popularity.

Student: There appear to be so many different religions, all under the banner of theism. This is often confusing for the general public. Sometimes the *vaiṣṇava* is asked: "Why are there so many different theistic religions? Someone is worshipping Allah, someone is worshipping Christ—there seem to be so many differences." How should he reply?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: According to the capacity of the people, there are different groupings. The truth is distributed in installments accordingly.

Those who are materialistically inclined generally worship the demigods to attain so many benefits:

kāmais tais tair hṛta-jñānāḥ,
prapadyante 'nya-devatāḥ

taṁ taṁ niyamam āsthāya,
prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā
(B.gītā 7:20)

"Persons whose good intelligence has been spoiled by illicit desires for exploitation and renunciation or other duplicitous pursuits worship other godly personalities such as the Sun-god and the many demigods. Being enslaved by their instincts, they adopt the corresponding rules and regulations of such worship."

This is called *upāsanā* worship. But the *vaiṣṇava*s are *nirupāsanā*; they do not follow that line. Those who follow the *upāsanā* are worshiping the demigods, who are in possession of some power of nature, in order to get a desired end. Those who seek good health go to Sūrya; for general satisfaction of any lusty desire, they go to Kālī; for property and resources, to the fire-god, Agni; and those who want knowledge go to Śiva. Lord Śiva has got versatile knowledge: in medicine, yoga, music, and penance. All these many qualifications are combined in him. Those that want *mukti*, liberation, go to Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa. But the 'Nārāyaṇa' of the followers of Śaṅkara is also partly under *māyā*. According to them Śiva is trying to get out of *māyā*, to become the master of *māyā*. In this way they represent him.

Capacity and Selection

According to their choice, their inner necessity, while wandering in different stages of misunderstanding, people will select their leader: "Oh, he will be best able to help me. My aim is in this direction, so I should go to him." Just as one who wants to be a good football player will naturally go to the most qualified leader in that field; one who wants to be a good merchant, he must go to the expert, and one who wants to be a research scholar, must similarly go to the most qualified in that area. Those whose minds are influenced by various material desires will approach those respective leaders and surrender to them (*kāmais tais tair hṛta-jñānāh, prapadyante 'nya-devatāḥ*)

For those who want real theistic life, there are also installments. In Mohammedanism and Christianity there is theism. They accept one eternal God and Master, but that acceptance is according to their nature as a group. Just as there is *brāhmaṇa* nature, *kṣatriya* nature, *vaisya* nature and so on. According to their general natures, different nations have been given such installments of theism.

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam we find that installments are distributed according to the receiver's collective capacity

as a group. Otherwise, if the whole is given at once, it will be too difficult, too complex for them to understand or to follow. So for the beginners, some theistic conception has been given only approximately, and not in detail. After attaining further birth and rebirth, when they come to a higher position, then higher education about theism will be imparted to them. With such a policy, arrangement has been made for everyone by the Lord through the various scriptures and saints.

Careful Guidance

This is why we find Vedic knowledge—truth existing beyond our present senses—presented throughout the scriptures in an indirect, veiled manner in order to instruct those who are undisciplined or foolish. People are to be dealt with according to their stage. A boy should be given an examination for a boy, not for an adult. The questions on a boy's examination will be of a different standard than those on the adult's. Gradually, one will be taken to the higher standard. Just as a child is guided with some modified policy, that sort of process has been similarly adopted in the scriptures:

parokṣa-vādo vedo 'yaṁ,
bālānām anuśāsanam

karma-mokṣāya karmāṇi,
vidhatte hy agadaṁ yathā
(S.Bhāg. 11:3:44)

"Childish and foolish people are attached to materialistic, fruitive activities, although the actual goal of life is to become free from such activities and attain Krishna consciousness, the service of Krishna. Therefore, the Vedic injunctions indirectly lead one to the path of ultimate liberation by first prescribing fruitive religious activities, just as a father promises his child some sweets so that the child will take his medicine."

Everywhere in the revealed scriptures this has been accepted. The degree of education should be imparted according to the audience's capacity. Otherwise, they won't be able to understand anything. There is a gradual process in the training—this is so everywhere. It is also true in our common experience. Progress does not come abruptly but is a process of continuous development.

Student: From where does theism begin? From its lower stages up to the higher, what is the gradation? What are the different conceptions?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: The whole gradation has been described in the following way by Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur in Caitanya-Śikṣāmṛtam.

First there is *ācchādita-cetana*, fully covered consciousness, like in trees and stones; they are *ācchādita*, thickly covered, although consciousness is there. Next, there is *saṇkucita-cetana*, as we find in the animal kingdom—a very narrowed consciousness. Then, *mukulita-cetana*, just awakening consciousness, as amongst the aborigine class. It is *mukulita*, not developed to a proper stage—half animal, half man. Here we find animism, worship of the various nature gods. Above this there is *vikasita-cetana*, in which there is some conception of God. This is where *varṇāśrama-dharma* begins.

Student: Are Christianity and Islam at this stage, *vikasita-cetana*?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Yes. Then lastly there is *pūrṇa-vikasita-cetana*, fully opened consciousness and its corresponding conception of God; that is *vaiṣṇavism*.

This is the general gradation; but again, there is subdivision in the human section. In *vikasita-cetana*, in the human stage, even before we find proper theism, there is morality. No theism has yet emerged, but there is morality. That constitutes the utilitarian class, altruistic class: they have recognition of morality, but they don't find the necessity of the existence of God.

There may be also theism without much moral

conception. So-called 'theism', is there, but no moral conception. Those of this persuasion do *hiṁsā*, violence, towards so many *jīvas* by indiscriminately murdering living creatures; they engage in this and other such immoral practices, and go on with a conception of God.

Gradation of Theism

After this, we find there is morality-plus-theism; the lower part of this is morality plus imaginary theism—*kalpitaśeṣvavāda*. The *kalpitaśeṣvavādī* propounds an imaginary theism combined with morality. For example, the French thinker Comte said that to have a conception of God is useful to us because it can be of help to us in society; it can do the work of the police by keeping the people in good order. It is seen to be the case with the general population—that if you encourage them to be God-fearing, if you spread this consciousness, then all shall enjoy the benefit of moral order in society. This was Comte's theory. And we may consider that the teachings of Śaṅkaracarya, as we have mentioned previously, are also of such category: imaginary theism with morality.

After this, there is real theism with morality. Real *varṇāśrama*, as given by Śrī Rāmānuja, and other conceptions of a similar nature, are of both morality and true theism.

After attaining the stage of true theism on a moral basis, the next stage of attainment for the *jīva*-soul is *pūrṇa-vikasita-cetana*, Vaiṣṇavism. Vaiṣṇavism represents *pūrṇa-vikasita-cetana*, fully opened, fully awakened consciousness. It is full-fledged theism. It may be described as 'theism without morality,' in that morality exists according to the complete theistic conception; morality, in and of itself, has less importance.

The guiding principle employed at this stage is: to do whatever is necessary for the service and satisfaction of the Lord. For example, a devotee might steal a flower to offer the Lord, so that the man who has cultivated that flowering tree may be benefited. It is theism in the fullest way, such that everything can be utilized for the satisfaction of the Lord; if this can be done, then everybody will be helped.

In this way, the theistic conception expands to the point that everything is for Him: Reality is for Itself. Everything is for Him, not for any other individual ownership. The Owner is One. The conditioned souls are not conscious that they belong to Him; they are like children who do not know of their guardian. But the devotees know; they are conscious of that: "This boy may not know that his guardian is there, but I know it is so. The

boy may be reluctant, but I must take the boy to Him; I must carry him to his guardian in spite of his reluctance." The devotees are conscious that: everything is for Him, and they utilize everything in that way, thereby doing good to all. Their life, their campaign in every way is such, whether or not it may be tasteful to the ordinary so-called religious or moral people. The devotees are right, independent of other opinions.

By Himself and for Himself

Everything is for Him, for the Lord. Śrī Krishna says:

ahaṁ hi sarva-yajñānāṁ
bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca
na tu mām abhijānanti
tattvenātaś cyavanti te
(B.gītā 9:24)

"I alone am the Enjoyer, the Lord and object of all sacrifice. Those who do not recognize My true transcendental nature fall down."

From this viewpoint, all conditioned souls in this world—everyone, including those who are masters of moral and scientific knowledge are considered 'minors'. The soul in bondage, any *baddha-jīva*, is minor. The 'majors' are those *vaiṣṇava*s who know that 'everything

is for Him', and the consequence of this understanding is that the soul must 'die to live'. They know that there is only one Enjoyer, that everything is meant for His pleasure, His satisfaction, and that it is by dying to any separate interest or false ego that the soul can truly live in the world of divine service. Those *vaiṣṇava*s are the guardians of the whole creation, and they utilize everything for Him to the real benefit of everyone in the world. Can you conceive of this? Can you follow?

Student: Yes.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: If you are able to understand this, then you will find some harmonious existence in this world. You will understand things in their proper perspective. Otherwise there is only ignorance.

According to the degree of ignorance, there is gradation: *tamaḥ*, to *mahā-tamaḥ*, to *mahā-mahā-tamaḥ*. Nature is divided into *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, and within this there are many subdivisions. There are those of the very lowest section where the ignorance is very thick; then those a little above that whose ignorance is a little less; and those above that still. Similarly, there is gradation among those under the mode of passion, under *rajo-guṇa*; and above that, among those under the higher, *sattvic* nature. The *nirguṇa* plane is

above all the various material qualities. It is a unified plane where one Guardian is guiding every limb and every idea of a person—who is in touch with full-fledged theism.

Student: Christians say the one Master is Christ.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: They say three: God the Father, God the Ghost, and God the Deliverer as Christ. There are three phases of conception in theism, according to Christianity. In Islam, there are so many messengers from God—Mohammed was such a messenger. The Mohammedans mostly accept the messengers of the Judaeo-Christian tradition: Moses, Abraham and others. But according to them the last messenger of God was Mohammed, and he is considered to be foremost. Some conception of God is there, but it is not so much developed as we find in Hindu ontology, or in the Vedas or Upaniṣads—in the revealed scriptures.

The renowned German scholar Max Muller once said, "The Upaniṣad in India will feed the whole world. The whole world will be fully nourished by them; not a drop of knowledge will be lost or missed, if the world can get the knowledge that is stored there." This was his conclusion.

Central Office

We can understand it in this way: within every phenomenon that exists, there is some intrinsic, central position, whether in gold, diamonds, industry, education, or religion. Within all of these there is an original, or most concentrated, position. We may not find the most fully-fledged manifestation everywhere that phenomenon may appear. So, in the case of religion, or theism, India was selected by God to be in the central or highest position. It is not unreasonable: a university college cannot be established in every village, but some particular place must be selected for it. It is the same for the hospital, the police station, and so on. So in this world, some place was selected to be the highest seat of religion, of theism. That came in the lot of India.

If we have the proper eye to see this, we won't be envious: "Why should it be India?" That thinking is ludicrous, just as someone from the village thinking "Why in our village is there only a primary school, and in that city there is the university?" The highest school for theistic education should be located somewhere on the globe, and the place selected was India. If we are to approach the comparison in theistic education, we should do so with this kind of background understanding.

And from that viewpoint Max Muller wrote: "If we look in the Upaniṣads, we will find that which will satisfy people of any religious inclination—and still the store will not be diminished, even slightly." That kind of knowledge is an eternal fountain: its water is always flowing; the fountain will never become dry.

No Prejudice

Wherever the universal truths of religion are found, they should be accepted. If it were not so, then those who are Christians from various nations, for example the Americans or the British, should say: "Christ was born in the Middle East; why should we take *his* instructions? He was not born on our soil; his teaching has not sprung from our country—why should we accept it?" But the geographical difference is all illusion, *māyā*. Wherever the real religious truth is found, we must be open to accept it for its own intrinsic value. We should not be guided by the physical, mundane affinity—to our bodies or countries. We must rise above all this material consciousness and be students; with complete openness. We shall be an enquirer after the truth, from wherever it comes.

The atom bomb was created in some particular location, but does that mean in other places people are not

trying to develop it? Will others say, "Oh, it was invented somewhere else—we won't take it!" The battle tank was first invented in France, during the first Great War—now it is everywhere. The rocket was first created in the form of the 'V2' of Hitler, but is now, in its developed form, existing everywhere. And if even here in this world, everything has universal character and application in this way, should we think that the spiritual world will be of a narrow, national kind of conception? Will the highest truth, which can give relief to all troubles, be relatively located? Rather, that will be the most universal. It will be unique.

Student: But the problem I have found on many occasions, is that when I speak with, for example a Christian, he will appreciate the high position of *bhakti* (devotion) and surrender as being above that of liberation, yet he will insist that Christ is the 'only way'.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: He may accept 'surrender', but surrender to whom? Surrender may be of many kinds—it may be to the family, the nation, and so on. But the value of surrender will be according to its criterion: surrender for what?

Student: Surrender to God.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: 'God' means what? What is the conception of God? There is the hazy conception and the

clear conception. We are to come to the clear conception of what God is. We are to come to a very minute comparative study, just as in the laboratory the germs and viruses will come under our closer inspection. The closest inspection will give us the deepest conception. So, what is God? Is it a hazy thing—unknown and unknowable God? Does God mean something unknown and unknowable and not anything concrete?

Student: The Christians say, "God is revealed in Christ."

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Christ gave us some conception, but still, that conception is hazy. Just as there exists a hazy conception about the sun and the moon, still they have their own, real existence. On closer inspection many more astonishing things about them will be seen, and ultimately those heavenly bodies will be found. They will be discovered in their real identity.

Student: But the Christians are afraid to go beyond what Christ has said.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: That tendency is everywhere. At every step it is to be found. A person is attached to whatever plane of knowledge or ignorance, he is in. Such is the case not only with religion, but everywhere—it is a tendency common to all.

Student: These Christians take excuse from the Bible;

Christ says that no one can come to the Father except through him.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: This too is a common thing: all peoples of the world have some sort of religious authority. Some people accept the Bible, some the Koran. The Hindu class will accept something else; the tribal Africans also have their authority, and the Śaṅkarites have theirs. But when a comparison is to be drawn, the people must come out of their local bigotry and approach the matter with an open mind. They will have to come out into the broad daylight, under the open sky, and consult, compare, reject, and accept. Otherwise, where is the chance of progress? Because whatever the conception in which one is presently situated, he is attached to that. Such is the situation everywhere, not only in religion.

For example, every nation may boast, "We are the first-class military power." But when there is war, it is decided who is who! Russia boasted, "We have the power to control the whole world". Others have also done the same. In the beginning of the second Great War, Emperor Tojo of Japan said, "We are prepared for a hundred years of war! The Europeans will fight together and be finished, and we will be Emperor of the whole world." This was his boast—but as it was shown, to think something is one thing, and reality is another.

Incomparable Theology

There was one Arabian gentleman who became a devotee. He said "From the beginning I had the tendency to go through the religious books of all the nations. In the course of that I found that the Indian religious writers have covered, in space and in time, a huge field—the most vast and ancient. In the Bible it is told that the world was created a few thousand years ago; but Indian theology says that so many evolutions and dissolutions have taken place. So many creations and dissolutions have occurred throughout history—the entire solar system has been dissolved, and again created, and again dissolved. The history of such vast spans of time is to be found in those writings. Time has been dealt with in such a spacious way compared to other theologians of the world. Space is also treated like this: the creation, formation and annihilation of the universe; and the history of the great planets, such as the polestar (Dhruvaloka) and the sun." Both geographically and historically, that gentleman found that nothing compares to what has been given in the Indian theological books.

He was also astonished to discover, that from beyond this body, and beyond this universe, those *ṛṣis* could

gather knowledge of such a graphic and spacious nature, collected from the planes beyond the known world, distributed by the propounders of the Indian religious scriptures. So that man concluded, "This must be the broadest amongst all religious conceptions." And he was attracted to search for the Truth in that way.

Student: If Krishna consciousness is the highest, it would seem that it would also be the most difficult for the conditioned soul to attain. And perhaps for Western devotees, or those who have taken birth in the non-Vedic cultures, it might be especially difficult. Sometimes one may think it would be easier for the spiritual seeker to approach God through the religion they were born into—for example, Christianity.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: It is not a question of creed or culture, but of awakening of consciousness. There are so many conceptions of Godhead. In the human section there are so many different stages, beginning with the atheist. In the beginning the soul is covered by dense ignorance, with no conception of even one's own self. Then, when his consciousness awakens further, he is able to discriminate, and through that he can give recognition to morality, but not yet theism. In that stage he can see the interest of others to be like his own.

Plane of Affinity

When a person gets even higher awakenment he comes to find that between the environment, himself and others, there is a connecting link, a common substratum of consciousness. All are standing on a common platform. And he will search: what is that? Why does it exist? What is it for? When he comes to investigate, gradually he feels more the importance of that plane which is connecting himself, his neighbor and the environment, and which creates some affinity between them.

Searching further, he finds that such a unifying plane, in which he exists, is both within him and without him. It permeates everything, and is very captivating. He becomes captured by its charm, its beauty. And now, the question arises about his own relationship with that plane. What is that relationship? How does it exist? That thing for which he feels such affinity: is it only some subtle element like air, or ether, or is it something of a higher order? Because he feels it within himself, in his heart, his mind, and he feels more curiosity to know about it.

Dynamic Search

In this way, the God-conception comes within the soul. Through the process of elimination his knowledge

improves, his conception of God improves, and that is progress. 'Progress' means to grow in knowledge. Through this process, in every field, man is progressing.

Life itself is dynamic—everything is progressing; it cannot remain in a static position. So, life means to search, it cannot but be so. In science, for example, Newton gave some conception, and then so many others came and gave a higher conception which was more graphic and extensive. In this way the knowledge progresses.

Just as in this world the primary schools are filled with students, as well as the colleges, universities and post-graduate colleges. There are those in the primary stage, the middle stage and the highest stage. So it is with the progress of the soul in his conception of God. There are so many souls occupying different levels of awakenment.

Outer Form, Inner Substance

What is the test of Vedic knowledge? How deep is your knowledge about the revealed Truth? *Vidyavataṅ bhāgavate parikṣara*: the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the test. It gives the standard against which all other conceptions must be measured. The standard is given there: the position of that central conception.

What is its capacity, utility, superiority of that Truth? Śrīmad Bhāgavatam says:

vadanti tat tattva vidas
tattvaṁ yad jñānam advayam
brahmeti paramātmeti
bhagavān iti śabdyate
(S.Bhāg 1:2:11)

"The different learned transcendentalists know the Absolute Truth as one undivided spiritual substance beyond duality; but they realize It in three phases: as Brahmān, Paramātma, and finally Bhagavān."

The central Truth is not Brahmān; Brahmān is the all-accomodating aspect of the environment. And Paramātma is the all-permeating aspect, who is within

everything, everywhere. Another aspect is Bhagavān. 'Bhagavān' means He is *bhagya*, auspicious; He is full of opulence, *aisvarya*. So the first interpretation of 'Bhagavān' may be given as *aisvaryaman*: the source of all power, the controller of all potency. But the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam has shown Bhagavān in another, revolutionary aspect; it has taken the Center from a position of power to love. It has shown the Center to be love. Love is above power; it exists in a deeper plane. Power is external, and love is higher.

Wholesale Surrender

'Bhagavān' means *bhajaniya-guna-visistha*: He is of such substance that whenever we come in connection with Him we want to surrender to Him, worship Him, merge our interest in Him. We want to throw ourself at His feet. We will think: "That for which I have been searching, the Lord of my heart, I have here! I don't want anything else." Bhagavān is such: He excites eagerness to fall at His feet. He is all-attracting; therefore He is called Bhagavān.

His nature is such that the *ātmarāmas*, those who have no attraction for this mundane world, will also feel irresistably pulled towards Him. He has such qualification. He attracts the soul to jump wholesale to His

service. He will draw our wholesale surrender.

So, *vidyavatan bhagavate pariksara*: the Bhagavat is the test. It asks us: "How far are you advanced in your theistic life? Can you do this wholesale surrender? Can you even think of it? Can you think that by 'dying' you can live a proper life; that by dying as you are at present—a wholesale dissolution—you will gain yourself a new life? Are you bold enough for this?"

Beauty and Love

The characteristic of the highest substance is not master of power or all-knowing, everything contained within Him as if 'floating in His belly'. Nor is it all-permeating, microscopic, existing in the smallest thing. All-permeating, all-pervading, or all-accomodating—these are not the highest qualities of the Supreme Substance. The characteristic of the Controller of all power, Nārāyaṇa, is one conception. But Who attracts us unconditionally towards Himself, so we only want to fall at His feet, He is such Beauty, such Love. That sort of conception is given by Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, and that is the highest conception against which all others must be measured. Have you any idea of the Absolute as the Center of love from anywhere in the revealed scriptures? Only Śrīmad Bhāgavatam has given us the highest

thing. That is the central world, the highest plane of existence we are called to live in. And Mahāprabhu came with that; He brought it to us freely. Not only are we fortunate to have the human form, but we have such a great prospect of life.

Look to Yourself

We should ask: what type of existence are we presently engaged in? I can go down again to be an insect, a beast, a tree. I am wandering in this vicious cycle of birth and death—this is my position. One moment I am at the top of the cycle; the next moment I am lost; I am nowhere. This is action and reaction. It is all only action and reaction. Now I am acting as master—then the reaction will come as a demand for me to pay my debt, and it will pull me down by my ear, just as the parent or schoolteacher punishes the misbehaving child. In this way we are moving in the material plane: higher and lower, up and down, continously. In Bhagavad-gītā Krishna says:

ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ
punar āvartino 'rjuna
mām upetya tu kaunteya
punar janma na vidyate
(B.gītā 8:16)

"Oh Arjuna, from the highest planet in the material universe, that of Lord Brahmā, down to the lowest, all are places of misery because the residents of all these planes are under the law of repeated birth and death. But for one who attains My abode, O son of Kuntī there is no rebirth."

True Friends

How are we to come out of this vicious cycle and attain the fulfillment of our life? Our only friends are those who are carrying this information to the public: the Absolute Center is Love. Our best friends are those who are on such an errand. All other seeming friends should be dismissed. They should all be dismissed if we are sincere. Now, this will be the form of our progressive life: to move towards that Center. And for that there must be elimination, and new acceptance. In this way, leaving behind all other formalities, the inner spirit must make us mad to advance further towards Him.

Student: Guru Mahārāj, I have one question. In Caitanya-līlā the Spiritual Master of Gadādhara Pandit is Puṇḍarīk Vidyānidhi. But what is Puṇḍarīk Vidyāndhi's position in Krishna-līlā?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Gadādhara Pandit has been considered to be Rādhārāni's incarnation; and Puṇḍarīk Vidyānidhi is considered to be Vṛṣabhānu-rāj, the father

of Rādhārāni in Krishna-līlā.

Student: Puṇḍarīk Vidyānidhi has such uncommon pastimes. They are very difficult to understand.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: He is *paramahaṁsa*. Different devotees have come to this world to show different types of *bhajan*. *Bhajan* is the common factor among all such extraordinary devotees. They are all fully devoted, but they are showing themselves as different types, different models. So all are not one and the same. But their common end, Krishna consciousness, is to be considered. If one is directed totally towards Krishna consciousness in all positions, then he is properly situated.

Suppose there are many patients suffering from the same disease. The doctor may not advise everyone to take the same diet. It will be similar, but not the same; according to the capacity or condition of the stomach, one patient is given one thing and another something else. Similarly, the aim of those who are going towards Krishna consciousness is as one, but the physical arrangements may be a little different. So in the case of the *paraṁahamsas*, devotees of extraordinary characteristics, their activities should not be judged in relation to the general standard of what is considered good and bad.

Pundarik Paramahamsa

One example of this is Puṇḍarīk Vidyānidhi. In his youth, Gadādhara Pandit was always very eager to see *sādhus*. So one day Mukunda asked him: "Would you like to go and see a *sādhu*? I know of a good *sādhu*; I can take you."

"Yes, yes, take me to him!"

So Mukunda brought him there. Gadādhara Pandit saw that Puṇḍarik Vidyānidhi was sitting on a very soft bed with the finest covers; he was smoking an elaborately carved pipe; his hair was styled very beautifully, and his clothes were of the most expensive cut. Gadādhara thought, "Oh! What sort of *sādhu* has Mukunda brought me to see?" He had some doubt in his mind. Mukunda knew this; he could feel it. So he chanted one *śloka* from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

aho bakīyam stana-kāla-kūṭaṁ
jighāṁsayāpāyayad apy asādhvī
lebhe gatiṁ dhātry-ucitāṁ tato 'nyaṁ
kaṁ vā dayāluṁ śaraṇaṁ vrajema

(S.Bhāg.3:2:23)

In this verse Uddhava is speaking to Vidura: "Who should I worship, other than Krishna? His magnanimity is so great that when Putanā came to kill Him by poison,

she was given the position as mother to Him in His domain. Among those who are worshipable, He is the most magnanimous personality. Who shall I have as my worshipable Lord, greater than this?"

This *śloka* created some movement in the heart of Puṇḍarīk Vidyānidhi, and despite his external appearance, gradually something else began to show itself. Throwing away the valuable smoking-pipe, he began to shred his expensive clothing and his bedding; he began to tear his well-decorated hair and show many different kinds of extraordinary behavior. Then he began to roll on the ground, his body spasming; words from that verse: '*kaṁ vā dayāluṁ… śaraṇaṁ vrajema…*' were coming intermittently from Puṇḍarīk's mouth.

Then Gadādhara Pandit thought: "Oh! Even a small sentiment about the magnanamity of Krishna can produce so much revolution in his heart! He must be a great devotee." In this way Gadādhara Pandit began to understand the dignified position of Puṇḍarīk Vidyānidhi.

Inner Engagment

So, it is not always that 'the man may be known by his dress'. For Puṇḍarīk Vidyānidhi, his opulent appearance and activity is only an outer showing; he does not

care; he has no attachment for it—to him everything is one and the same. He is only showing such an opulent fashion externally, but he is not a slave to those things—to beautiful clothes, hair, or any other such thing.

Similarly, it is told about Rājarṣi Janaka: if he should have one hand on the soft breast of a lady and another hand in the fire, there is no change, no disturbance in his consciousness. Both cases—enjoying and suffering—are the same to him. Softness and burning sensation; he is tolerating both. So, if a man who can tolerate the pain of fire-burning, puts his hand on the soft part of a lady, it is nothing to him. The inner man is otherwise engaged; the outward manifestation is only an external posture, and it cannot affect him at all. It cannot disturb him from his engagement. Do you follow?

Student: Yes.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Another example is Lord Rāmacandra. The day before he was to be installed on the throne, all in the kingdom were rejoicing. But Rāmacandra Himself was in a serious frame of mind. His mood was not very light, not very pleasing. He was thinking that the next day, He is going to receive the great responsibility of discharging His duty to the kingdom: "A great burden is coming on My head. I shall

have the responsibility of looking after so many subjects." This was His sober mood. Then when He heard that instead of being enthroned, He was to go to the forest—that His stepmother had forced His father to enthrone Bharata, her son, and to banish Rāmacandra to the forest—Rāmacandra's temperament remained the same: He was going to discharge a duty. To get the throne is duty; to obey His father's will by going to the forest also duty. By accepting banishment to the forest, He is discharging a duty, and His temperament does not change. His balance of mind, His equilibrium, is not disturbed. He is not a slave to any event, be it good or bad; He is perfectly equipoised to carry out His duty. Even if He must go to hell, He is not in any way disturbed.

Such a quality is also manifest in the exclusive devotees of the Lord:

nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve
na kutaścana bibhyati
svargāpavarga-narakeṣv
api tulyārtha-darśinaḥ
(S.Bhāg. 6:17:28)

"Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, never

fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation, and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord."

Parvati's Curse

This verse is in connection with the following story related in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Once Lord Śiva was sitting with his wife Pārvatī on his lap; by his desire she was there, and he was resting. Then his friend and previous classmate Citraketu happened by, and, seeing this, made some remark:

"Oh Sankara, what are you doing? Of course, I don't question your dignity; but, to the public, it is not a good lesson, not a good example. You should consider this."

Pārvatī was enraged: "You don't know the greatness of Mahādev? You are making some remark about him? You are ridiculing his practice? Your views are not pure, so you must take a demonic birth."

But Citraketu only said, "Yes, I accept your curse." And he went away.

Then Mahādev, his mood a little angry, spoke to Pārvatī: "Do you know devotees of Nārāyaṇa? Do you know who they are? Citraketu has not done anything wrong. He is my friend, and what I am doing should

not be publicly done. That is why his remark is not very insulting to me. He is my friend, and in a friendly way he gave such a slight remark. But you could not tolerate it; you cast a curse upon him. And what was *his* attitude? He could have cast a similar curse on you—he has that power—but he did not. He only accepted your curse and went away. So, who are those devotees? Do you know them?"

Siva's Praise

Then Lord Śiva instructed Pārvatī with this *śloka*:

nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve,
na kutaścana bibhyati,
svargāpavarga-narakeṣv,
api tulyartha-darśinau
(S.Bhāg. 6:17:28)

"The devotees of Nārāyaṇa do not care for anything of this world, good or bad; both heaven and hell are equal to them. They are not afraid of any condition of life; they are prepared for any eventuality, whether '*svarga*', '*āpavarga*', or '*naraka*' (heaven, salvation or hell). All are equal to them."

If such a devotee has to go to hell, the other sufferers there will be benefited, but no hellish thing will be able

to touch him; he is always surrounded by the Lord's protection. Just as when a man in good health goes to serve an infectious patient, the infection cannot enter him. But if the helping man's own health is weak, he will fall prey to that infection. Similarly, the devotees of Nārāyaṇa are of such a type that wherever they are, whatever unfavorable circumstances they are in, they are protected by *bhakti-rasa*. Their 'under-garment' is of the purest material; nothing can pierce or harm them. So, *tulyārtha-darśinaḥ*—everything is equal in their eyes. Their vision is such. They are wandering in the world of Krishna; wherever they go is by Krishna's will. And whatever comes to them, they see: "Oh, it is Krishna's will. I am serving His purpose." They are living only with this idea: that they are serving His purpose. They are not suffering from any local interest, but always they are in such consciousness; they remain always merged in the universal interest.

The Nirguna Plane

Once, after the Kurukṣetra war was finished, one young *ṛṣi* named Utaṇka met Krishna and told Him:

"Krishna, I shall curse you."

"Oh, why?"

"Because You are the cause of all the misery that is the

outcome of that great, vast battle of Kurukṣetra—so many widows, so many orphans, so many crippled persons are all crying out of pain and misery, and You are at the bottom of it all!"

Then Krishna said, "Oh, you *ṛṣi-kumar*, young *ṛṣi*, whatever power you have accumulated by your penance will be finished if you will come to utilize it against Me. No effect will come to Me. I am in *nirguṇa*. My position is without any material quality. It is *gunatita*, transcending the material qualities. There is *sattva-rajaḥ-tamaḥ*, the three *gunas*, materially binding qualities of goodness, passion, and ignorance. But above these three, there is the universal angle of vision. My position is there. That plane is *ahaitukī-apratihatā*. There exists the causeless and irresistable flow of the most fundamental world.

"Just as electricity has vibration, flow, so I exist in a plane of dynamic movement. That movement is irresistable, and it is causeless. It has no object but is an automatic, wholesome movement of infinite character. I am there. All My activity is from that plane. So waves from any other plane that will come to clash with it will be finished. The plane in which I am moving will continue forever. It is eternal: it has no beginning and no end; it is a harmonious flow. I am there. Nothing can

affect My position. Whatever relative power you, *ṛṣi-kumar*, have acquired will be finished if you throw it against the irresistable flow wherein I am moving." This was Krishna's reply.

Exclusive Service Mood

The divine plane is *nirguṇa*, and in relation to that, only the internal position should be judged, not the external. The internal situation is all-important.

Such criterion may be applied in the case of *grḥasta* devotees; their inner purity we may consider from this standpoint. The *sannyāsīns*, of course, should not cast any glance over the ladies. They will consider doing so a very filthy thing. But there are *grḥasta* devotees who are producing so many children. They may still be cent-per-cent pure—no enjoying mood, no spirit of exploitation is in them. And it is not only that the enjoying mood may be absent, but they have a serving mood: the *grḥasta* is joined in union and the child comes, but in that there is a fully serving mood. There is no mood of enjoyment. It may be so.

In a word: exploitation is bad, serving is good. The outer color of the thing does not matter much. If any activity is approached through the spirit of service, if it is the vibration from that most fundamental plane that

is influencing any external activity, whatever it may be, then that activity is cent-per-cent pure. So thieving, lying—everything may be pure if the vibration is coming from the most fundamental plane. If the motive of power comes, being pushed from that plane, it is alright. That is the *nirguṇa-līlā*. There exists not only selflessness, but the fullest self-surrendering to the Center. All movement is actuated by that power. The surrendered servitors are fully established in *līlā*, and that is *nirguṇa*.

Local and Universal Interest

So it is not by the form but by the spirit—the real position—that things should be judged. Whatever we think we are achieving or understanding by our local or provincial experience, if we are accepting that local interest as our standard, has no value. That is to say: it has value, but temporary value because it is partial. Its locality is partial; it is part of space, and also part of time, and that is all of limited value. That kind of local standard, is to be applied to the ordinary persons but not to the *nirguṇa* servitors. The activities of such servitors may appear to be similar: doing seemingly undesirable things such as stealing, lying and fighting. But because their motivation is from the *nirguṇa* plane, they are not bad. Their nature is of a different order.

The Pull of the Transcendental World

It is said: *meghācchānāṁ na durdinam, tadinam durdinam manye*: a good day or a bad day is not to be judged by the weather, but the day we do not talk about, or cultivate understanding of the Supreme Being, our Lord, is hopeless and non-productive. It is a wasted day if there is no consultation about Him, if we forget our own Lord. He is the be-all and end-all for us, the all-in-all in our life. He is our Lord of lords.

Soul's Awakening

There is a verse in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

> **avismṛtiḥ kṛṣṇa-pādāravindayoḥ**
> **kṣiṇoty abhadrāṇi ca śaṁ tanoti**
> **sattvasya śuddhiṁ paramātma-bhaktiṁ**
> **jñānaṁ ca vijñāna-virāga-yuktam**
>
> *(S.Bhāg 12:12:55)*

Here it is said: *avismṛtiḥ kṛṣṇa-padāravindayoḥ*, do not forget the divine lotus feet of Krishna. Because by the continuous remembrance of Krishna, all the undesir-

able things, the dirty things within you, will have to leave (*kṣiṇoty abhadrāni*).

Without Krishna consciousness, without consciousness of Divinity, all mundane things are like dirt. That dirt should be removed. It should be destroyed by the continuance of Krishna consciousness. That remembrance cleans out all the dirt, and it extends to our real welfare. *Ca śaṁ tanoti*: it produces from within real goodness. *Sattvasya-śuddhiṁ*: when the alloy is eliminated from your ego, from your present self-conception, then your whole existence is purified. Your self-conception is false ego; it is full of alloy, and that will be destroyed by your continued God-consciousness. As your existence is purified, gradually you will find the Lord, Paramātma, within yourself (*paramātma-bhaktiṁ*). You will be able to understand who you are, *jīvātma*, and who is supporting you from above, Paramātma.

Then, *jñāna ca vijñāna*: you will find a special type of God-conception that will show to you both the Lord and His potency—the different potencies and the Owner of those potencies. *Virāga-yuktam*: you will feel the effect of this two-fold: both non-attraction to the mundane world, and properly adjusted attraction towards the Truth. You will feel such development within you.

Sweet Home

So continue with God-consciousness, and it will take you to the desired position. It will take you back Home. And you will be able to conceive how sweet that Home is. If you somehow try to maintain the fire of God-consciousness, all alloy within you will be destroyed; your purified self will come out from the fire, and you will find everything your heart really desires.

In this verse it is said: *jñāna-vijñāna-virāga-yuktam*. You will be able to clearly conceive both the knowledge of the Whole and the knowledge of the different parts and potencies of the Whole in detail. It will be clear in your heart. So, your faith will not be simply blind; do not think it to be so. It is not that faith means only blind faith, blind emotion. That plane where your heart is to live is not a domain of only blind emotion, but there is proper knowledge there. It is the land of proper understanding, where the Center exists, the Lord, as well as so many potencies, which are controlled by Him. You will be able to acquire such a position of understanding.

So dive deep into God-consciousness. It is the key to the highest success of life and it will take you to your Home. And that Home is so sweet! It is not a foreign land; not that you will take so much risk only to go to

some unknown place, where you may be dealt with in any way. There will be no such apprehension, no such doubt or suspicion. But as much as you will be able to make progress on that side, you will find such sweetness, such home-like comfort and confidence.

Heart Capture

Once a devotee was out preaching and distributing books. He entered an office to speak with a lawyer, but the lawyer would not allow the devotee any time. He said, "I am so busy—don't you see? So many clients are standing in line, they are queuing up to see me, and you have come to talk with me! How is it possible for me to spare any time for all these idle talks about religion?" He would not spare the devotee a moment. But that devotee somehow made him hear something about Krishna consciousness and presented him with the book 'Search for Śri Krishna'. After reading a few pages, the lawyer ordered his secretary, "Pay fifty dollars to this gentleman. Write him a check."

Student: Mahārāj, actually that lawyer specialized in criminal law; if he read the part about Krishna stealing butter, perhaps he was attracted by that!

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: (laughing): Then he should have concocted a case against that devotee, saying "You have

come to introduce *this* idea, of God stealing? Then everyone in this world will imitate Him; they will all be thieves!"

Student: He could claim, "Your God is teaching anti-religious principles, *adharma*!"

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: But by his own reasoning, that lawyer must also have to conclude that not God, but all in this world, including himself, are culprits. Because if God is *advaya-jñāna*, the Perfect Whole, and *abhijñāḥ svarāṭ*, the fully independent Absolute, and if He happens to be a thief, then all here who try to imitate Him in that way are envious of Him. To become jealous of His activities, they must first be thinking that they are equal to Him. But that is not the fact. He is Absolute—*you* are a culprit! And, *nirmātsarāṇāṁ-satām*: only those who are not envious can accept this truth (S.Bhāg.1:1:3). If God is a thief, also, we can consider that we have some hope. How is that?

A Beautiful Solace

When I was a college student, I once went to hear a lecture given by a Goswāmī. There he said, "Because Krishna is a thief, we have some hope! We have erected such strong fencing all around us so that nothing good may enter. We have made a boundary wall, and there are so many locks, so much opposition, that nothing can

enter. But Krishna is a thief. By stealth that thief will come for His own interest!"

So we have tried our best to construct a wall around our heart so that no God consciousness can enter. But as a thief Krishna will enter, and that is our solace. One day He may stealthily enter as a thief into our heart and capture it. That is our only hope. Consciously we won't invite Him to come within our heart, so only the 'thief-God' is our solace. So, let God be a thief! When goodness comes in that way—stealthily—such mercy is above the consideration of justice.

True Charity

There was one Mohammedan gentleman living in the Hooghly district of Calcutta. His name was Haji Mohammed Mahasim. He was a bachelor and owned much property, a rich man but of a very charitable disposition. In Hooghly there is a big mosque commemorated to his name. He used to give charity stealthily. He would move around in the poorest areas of the city at night, disguised in very plain clothes, and, unseen, he would throw bags of coins into the dwellings.

If money comes stealthily to someone in such a way, it is not considered undesirable. And if Krishna comes stealthily into our hearts, as a thief, how easily we may get

Him! But such dealings are all above justice. They are in the plane of mercy. Above the plane of justice, in the land of mercy, affection and love, such things are possible. The good enters stealthily into the bad, the undesiring party, the exploiter, and makes him good.

Feeler and Felt

First we must understand our present undesirable position as an exploiter. The conditioned soul is the exploiter of nature, but in actuality, he is being exploited by matter. We have to be able to see clearly the gain and the loss in this interaction. First of all we must be able to discriminate properly between matter and spirit: there is the action and behind it the consciousness.

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj Prabhupāda gave this example: there are two men, one has eyes but is crippled; the other can move but he has no eyes. Matter, though moving, has no feeling—it is not the conscious party; that position belongs to the man who is endowed with feeling. In Bhagavad-gita we find:

kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve
hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate
puruṣaḥ sukha-duḥkhānāṁ
bhoktṛtve hetur ucyate

(B.gita 13:21)

"Material nature is said to be the cause of all conditioned activities of the mundane senses and their effects, whereas the living entity is the cause of his own suffering and enjoyment in this world."

Who is more important—the feeler or the felt? The criterion of happiness is confined in the feeler. And we have to consider: is happiness necessary? And if so, why is it necessary? Happiness is possible only in the subjective existence—it is possible for the soul. Avoiding this material engagement, one may feel more happiness. He will be *ātmārāma*, self-satisfied. Presently entangled in the unhappy substance, one must seek to become *ātmārāma*. *Ātmārāma* means one who is established within himself and not outside himself.

Supersoul World

Even they who are *ātmārāma*, who have attained that standard, find more happiness when they come in contact with with Paramātmā, the Supreme Soul. In the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam the existence of the higher *ātma*, of the Supersoul world, is fundamentally established:

sūta uvāca
ātmārāmāś ca munayo
nirgranthā apy urukrame

kurvanty ahaitukīṁ bhaktim
ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ
(S.Bhāg. 1:7:10)

"Sūta Goswāmī said; All the *ātmārāmas*, those who find satisfaction in the self, and especially those who are situated on the path of spiritual realization, being already free from slavery to matter, feel the desire to serve the Supreme Person with pure devotion. The Lord, being the Possessor of all transcendental qualities, is able to attract all living beings, even those who are liberated."

Those who are self-sufficient are also attracted by some higher ecstasy. So this is the positive proof that higher ecstasy exists. Though of a much finer type, it is real, because the self-sufficient people find joy when coming in contact with that apparently abstract thing. That is the proof: that a man who does not care for anything of this world, who is almost independent of material existence, can be drawn by that transcendental substance.

Consider Śukadev Goswāmī. Already self-realized from before his birth, he does not want anything in this world; even he doesn't wear any clothes. He only sometimes takes a cup of milk if it comes easily. He does not care for anything in this mundane plane—he has quite an independent life. He is *ātmārāma*, engaged in himself,

not in any material, objective consciousness. And he has become attracted by something of a seemingly abstract nature. So, there must be something above the soul's own subjective existence in a still higher plane that is *adhokṣaja*, beyond ordinary perception.

When that plane comes down to contact us, we can feel it, and when it withdraws, we are helpless— we cannot contact it, cannot touch it. It is similar to the phenomenon of the "flying saucer." You have heard of a flying saucer?

Student: Yes.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: Recently it was reported in the newspaper that there was a rumor that a craft of some kind—an unidentified flying object or flying saucer—was coming to make contact with Earth. From here, the airforce pilots apparently sighted it, but when they tried to follow it disappeared.

The *adhokṣaja* plane of existence is something like that; it can come down to make contact with us, but when we chase after it, when we try to capture it, suddenly it is nowhere to be found. That is the nature and the proof of the higher existence. Just as with the flying saucer, the airplane pilots see something is coming towards them, but when they give chase, it disappears. So

a world of more efficient machinery exists on the other side. Based on their experiences, those pilots and other aeronautical experts are now admitting the existence of some higher plane of life.

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Śukadev Goswāmī informs Mahārāj Parīkṣit:

prāyeṇa munayo rājan
nivṛttā vidhi-ṣedhataḥ
nairguṇya-sthā ramante sma
guṇānukathane hareḥ
(S.Bhāg.2:1:7)

"Oh King, even the most advanced transcendentalists who are above the regulative principles and restrictions feel the greatest pleasure in describing the glories of the Supreme Lord."

There is such taste in the topics of the Lord, in His names, forms, pastimes, paraphernalia and associates. All are existing in the higher plane. But how are we to prove the existence of this higher plane? We cannot enter at our will to have any experience of it. Then what is the proof that such a plane exists at all? Only that some accomplished transcendentalists of this world, experts of the highest class, find that something is disturbing their complete experience of self-satisfaction. That plane is

disturbing them and attracting them towards Itself.

Proof of the Higher Plane

In the present day also, we find that there is a particular group of people who do research in order to prove scientifically that there is rebirth, transmigration of the soul. Through methods such as hypnosis they claim that in their previous birth they were in a certain place: "Yes, I was here and this was my room. I put my things here, in this chest. They are still left there." And later, when they are actually taken to that place, it appears just as they have described. Those who want to show scientific proof of rebirth are collecting such examples, which are demonstrated as proof of the soul's transmigration, its continued existence birth after birth.

In a similar way, the *ātmārāmas*, those who have superceded any charm of this mundane plane, stand as proof that there is a higher dimension of existence because such an area is irresistably attracting them.

So that higher plane does exist, and it is not mundane. Śukadev Goswāmī says, "You all know that I am well established in the non-material world, that no charm for any form of the material world exists in me. But some new, unknown type of *līlā,* some ecstatic pastimes full of personality have attracted my heart.

Don't think that this is mundane. No mundane thing can have any attraction for me. This is transcendental; you may take it for certain. I stand as evidence to the fact that there is a transcendental world made of higher dignity, higher quality. I stand as evidence to the fact because nothing of mundane character can affect me or disturb my balance, my equilibrium. The equilibrium of such full, all-spiritual consciousness cannot be disturbed by any worldly attraction. Some supernatural attraction has come to disturb my equilibrium and attract me towards Itself."

Supernatural Attraction

ātmārāmāś ca munayo
nirgranthā apy urukrame
kurvanty ahaitukīṁ bhaktim
ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ
(S.Bhāg. 1:7:10)

This verse describes the attraction felt for the super-subjective plane of life by those who have already attained self-realization. Those who are in the disciplic order, the lineage of descending knowledge in devotion, may experience a lesser degree of intensity than what is described here. But still, through their *sukṛti*, their fortune, and their *śraddha*, faith, those devotees feel

themselves to be most extremely fortunate. They are like witnesses. Though they are very insignificant, they are the most fortunate witnesses to something that is infinitely great.

Their feeling is; "Here is something extraordinary, something unexperienced, and my inner heart is hankering for that. All the charms of this world are forever finished for me. Now if I want to live at all, I shall live for that—at any risk. My whole future is invested in that wonderful thing. I can't stand to live without that great thing. I must have it. I must attain such a position; otherwise, I do not like or want any sort of existence. I have had a little taste, a peep into that beauty; now that is my life. My life is there. If I want to live at all, I must get it. Without it, everything is tasteless. I have finished with all other standards of life; they hold no charm for me; they are all tasteless. I only want that thing. That is the fulfillment of my life. Life is worth living only because it has got that ultimate connection."

Mutual Help

How is one to attain that fulfillment? Only with the association of those who are eager for it. "Birds of a feather flock together." There are others of similar nature and if you want such a thing, then go and mix with them, and

try to get it by mutual help. In that field of divine aspiration there are the experts and the beginners. The newcomers advance by the association of those who are in a position to help them. And through giving their assistance, the helpers are also helped, given nourishment, as so many things of substance are drawn out of them.

The Test of Taste

Service means to remain in connection with the advice of the *vaiṣṇava*, not some activity on the physical plane. Still, activity is necessary sometimes, otherwise in solitary life the memories of so many past incidents come to prey on us, to disturb us. So *sādhu-saṅgha* is always recommended, and our *bhajan* life shall continue on that basis. That is a safe and fruitful foundation for us. Krishna gives His assurance:

sarva-dharmān parityaja
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

(B.gītā 18:66)

"Just abandon all varieties of religion and surrender exclusively unto Me. I shall protect you from all sinful reactions; do not fear."

He says, "All the debts you have ever incurred, I shall pay off; there will be nothing for you to worry for. From any position you may join Me, and I shall take the full responsibility because you are My devotee."

When Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj Prabhupāda returned

from America to India with his first group of disciples, he made them stay in a house somewhere in Vrindavan. Near that place was the *ashram* of one influential person, a Goswāmī. One of Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj's disciples was seduced by the teachings of that gentleman, and he left his godbrother group to stay with him. Later on, realizing his mistake, the disciple came back to Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj and prayed before him: "I have made a mistake, but I have come back; please accept me." Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj told him: "Yes, I forgive you. You are my boy. You have committed some mistake, but I forgive you. I accept you. Do not worry. Now go on, continue with your duties."

Krishna says, "You are Mine; I forgive you. Because you are Mine, you have the right to demand everything from Me! By My own law, I am bound to do anything and everything for you because I am your Owner. You belong to Me, so when you come to Me, to My shelter, I take the whole charge for your past, present, and future. Everything is Mine. It is My responsibility, and I take the risk for that. You may have done something wrong, but you did not know what was right or wrong. You could not understand. I forgive you." With this spirit, Krishna is appealing: *mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*. "You won't have to

lament; I take the whole burden for your past actions." Such is the nature of the Infinite Truth: all-accomodating, all-sympathetic, all-embracing, all-fulfilling.

Akhbar's Choice

During the reign of the Moghul Emperor Akhbar, there was an exhibition of the deities of all the Hindu Gods. Though Mohammedan by creed, Akhbar was very generous and very kind to all religious conceptions. While visiting that exhibition, Akhbar was proceeding around the hall, inspecting all the representations there and asking the exhibitors: "Who is *this* god? What are his activities, his pastimes? Where did he descend on earth?" and so on. At one point he came before the figure of Krishna, depicted in Vrindavan playing His flute. After seeing everything in the hall, he remarked to the exhibitors, indicating the figure of Krishna: "Amongst your Gods, this god is the highest of all because He does not have the worry of any management; He is completely free, enjoying His life, playing the flute with no worry about anything. The highest conception of your God is here. He has no cares, no troubles, nothing of the kind. To get His company will be very beneficial!"

This is the nature of Krishna-*līlā*; it is playful. To be

engaged in play without anxiety is the highest *līlā*. Krishna shows His pastimes in this world, in *bhauma* Vrindavan, *prapañca* Vrindavan, like an exhibition to test our taste, to give an opportunity to taste: "Do you want this?" In that divine exhibition, so many things are shown for our choice. The different *līlās* of the Lord in His various Infinite Forms and Pastimes come to this world to test our choice: "Do you want this? Or this?" Such opportunity is offered.

Kali or Krishna

Once one *vairāgī* came here to the Maṭh. She was an old woman wearing red cloth, a follower of Śiva-*śakti*. I asked her, "What do you want after death? Do you want Kālī; do you want her association? Do you want to be her maidservant? Or do you want to be with Śiva, with his friends or his servants, like Nandi and Bṛngi? Do you want to become one of them? Do you want to become four-handed, like the servitors of Nārāyaṇa? Or do you want to become a *gopī*, or a cowherd boy, wandering in Vrindavan with Krishna or with Nanda and Yaśodā? What do you want?"

Hearing this, she answered: "Yes, if it could be so, if such a beautiful life were possible, then I really want to be in Vrindavan. That I like best, not to be in Vaikuṇṭha,

nor to be one of the friends or servants of Śiva, nor one of the she-maids of Kālī who are chewing on the severed hands of her victims, drinking their blood and so many horrible things."

Then I told her, "If after death the possibility of such a simple, peaceful, beautiful life in Vrindavan really exists, then why do you follow your present path? You just see the ultimate position and consider what is suitable for you."

So, the exhibition of Krishna's pastimes takes place here, and the chance is given to us: "What do you really want? What appeals to your innermost heart? See where your taste is, and come forward accordingly for your future attainment."

Human Form Supreme

Of all the pastimes of Krishna, the highest are in the human form:

kṛṣṇera yateka khelā, sarvottama nara-līlā,
nara-vapu tāhāra svarūpa
gopa-veśa, veṇu-kara, nava kiśora, naṭa-vara
nara līlāra haya anurūpa

(Cc. Madhya 21:101)

"Lord Krishna has many pastimes, of which His

pastimes as a human being are the best. His form as a human being is the Supreme Transcendental Form. In this form, He is a cowherd boy. He carries a flute in His hand, and His youth is just beginning. He is also an expert dancer. All this is just suitable for His pastimes as a human being."

Correspondingly, the human form in this world is the best for attainment of the service of Krishna in the divine realm. It is for this reason that it is so valuable. The poet Caṇḍīdās says:

> "O brother, please listen:
> this human form is above all,
> There is nothing above it! I appeal to you all,
> Members of the human race: from my heart
> I am giving this advice, born of my experience—
> Your human form, its pastimes, its movement,
> Are the crown in nature's hall."

Don't Commit Suicide

But the supreme value of human life is misrepresented in a mundane way by those such as the Rāmākrishna sect. They say that to "serve God" means only to serve man and his needs in this world. They claim: "The human being is above all; Caṇḍīdās has

said so. Therefore, serving man is serving God. We should only serve the fallen souls, the human race, through so many works of welfare."

But the real value of the human life is clarified by the scriptures. They advise us: "Utilize this human form to attain the divine plane of Krishna's pastimes. Human life is very suitable to reach that highest plane— it is very similar in many aspects. The human birth is rarely attained, and if you avoid this chance to approach the divine realm through it, you commit suicide. It is not a small mistake you are committing; it is the greatest mistake if you lose this chance— it amounts to no less than suicide. So try for that highest plane. If you lose this birth, there is no guarantee that again you will get a human birth. You may have to take birth as other species of life. Remember the case of Bharat Mahārāj! At the time of his death, he had some intense attention for a deer-cub, to whom he had given shelter after it became separated from its mother. He was lamenting, "Oh, who will look after this young one?" In his next birth he became a deer. Such a horrible thing that the impression of the young deer caught him and took such a shape. Such a dangerous position you are all in. So always strive for the higher plane."

The English poet Longfellow has written:

> "Trust no future howe'er pleasant!
> Let the dead past bury its dead!
> Act—act in the living present!
> Heart within and God o'erhead!"

This is the advice of the scriptures: "What the future holds, you do not know. So don't rely on any future; take the whole responsibility of the present to approach the divine realm and make your human life a success."

In Manu-saṁhitā it is stated:

> **vidvabhiḥ sevitah sadbhir,**
> **nityam adveśa-rāgibhih**
> **hṛdayenābhyanujñāto,**
> **yo dharmas taṁ nibhodhata**

Those who are well versed in revealed scriptures know and serve the real *dharma*, the real religion. What should be the symptoms of those *sādhus*? They are established in revealed truth; they themselves are approved of by the true *sādhus*.

Then who is *sādhu*? That is told in this verse, *adveśa-rāgibhih*, a symptom of a *sādhu* is having no sympathy for the achievements of this world. From them, we may know what is *dharma*.

Also, *hṛdayenābhyanujñāto*, the evidence of the heart, which approves from its innermost quarter, says, "Yes! Here I am getting satisfaction." That is proof of the real standard of *dharma*, religion. The heart's response: "Yes, this is what I am searching for; I am searching for these such things." The heart will say this from within.

Dive Deep

Prahlāda Mahārāj advises:

na te viduḥ svārtha-gatiṁ hi viṣṇuṁ
durāśayā ye bahir-artha-māninaḥ
andhā yathāndhair upanīyamānās
te 'pīśa-tantryām uru-dāmni baddhāḥ

(S.Bhāg. 7:5:31)

He says that we are making too much of the covering of reality; we are devoting our minds to the external coating, *bahir-artha-māninaḥ*. But we do not dive deep into the eternal substance. If only we were to dive deep into reality, there we would find Visnu. The most peaceful substance is within, but it is covered, just as milk is covered by cream. We are making much of that cover. The real substance is within, just as fruit is covered by its skin. What we experience at present is the cover, the skin, and we are ignoring the very substance that the cover is protecting.

So, when we get these things from our Gurudev and Mahāprabhu, we think, "Oh, yes! These are heart-satisfying things." And we will find such things through progressively eliminating the external things. Progress means this process of elimination and acceptance: elimination of the lower and acceptance of the higher. It is dynamic; at each stage of our progress we will find, "Yes, this is what I am really searching for."

A Moment's Precious Grace

Our Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Ṭhākur, used to say that divine slavery, slavery to Krishna, is the most dignified position for a human being; it is the highest dignity of the human race. It is just the opposite to slavery in the material world. Slavery to a human being is reckoned as bad, but slavery to the Absolute Beauty is just the opposite. And the slaves of Krishna, the fully surrendered souls, never want to get out of that slavery; far from it, they will dismiss every other prospect, even liberation. They will say: "No, we don't want liberation; we are well where we are."

Infinite Hankering

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī has given this sloka:

kleśaghni śubhadā mokṣa
laghutā-kṛt sudurllabhā
sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā
śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī ca sā
(B.r.s Purvva 1:17)

"*Uttama-bhakti*, the purest devotion, is the vanquisher of all sin and ignorance, and the bestower of all auspi-

ciousness. Liberation is insignificant in the presence of such devotion, which is very rarely attained. It is the embodiment of the deepest ecstasy and the attractor of Sri Krishna Himself."

Here it says, *mokṣa-laghutā-kṛt sudurllabhā*: even after the stage of *mukti*, liberation, has been reached, such pure devotion—slavery to Krishna—is not easily attained. After liberation from all misconception, it is still very hard to get the service of Him or Her, of Krishna or Rādhārānī, to achieve a position in the transcendental service-world. *Śuddha-bhakti*, pure devotion, is *sudurlabhā*, very difficult to attain. But, *sāndrānanda viśeṣātmā*: even the slightest touch of it will fill you with high pleasure and ecstasy. And, *śrī kṛṣṇākarṣinī ca sā*: the final effect of devotion proper is that it will draw Krishna to your heart. Such devotion is Krishna's own potency, and it is the root of service (*bhakti kṛṣṇa-śakti, sevā mūla*). Your earnest and exclusive hankering for Him can draw Him, Sri Krishna, Reality the Beautiful Himself, to your heart.

Student: How can a person exclusively desire to serve Krishna when so many other desires are coming to him, as if bombarding him? What should he do? One may know, at least, what should be the highest standard or ideal to strive for; but in such circumstances, it seems

so difficult to be fixed in the pure service aspiration.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: If you can manage to enter the positive, then the negative will remain far away. This is the basic principle. As much as we can make progress towards the positive, automatically the negative will have to leave us. The positive is *sādhu-saṅgha, sādhu-śāstra-saṅgha,* association with saints and scriptures. No other thing is needed, only this simple thing: our association with the *sādhu*. And association with the *sādhu* means with surrender. So surrender to the positive, and, according to the degree of surrender and confidence in what the *sādhu* and *śāstra* say, the negative, the apparently irresistible demands of material desire, will automatically be withdrawn.

Within the positive, there is gradation: devotion to Nārāyaṇa (*vaikuṇṭha-bhakti*), Rāmacandra, Dwarakeśa, and then Krishna in Vrndavan. Progress through selection and elimination will continue there. Always this should be our earnest prayer:

> **viracaya mayi daṇḍaṁ dīnabandho dayām vā**
> **gatir iha na bhavattah kācid anyā mamāsti**
> **nipatatu śata-koti nirbharaṁ vā navāmbhas**
> **tad api kila payodaḥ stūyate cātakena**
>
> *(Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī)*

"Oh Friend of the most needy, whether You chastise me or reward me, in the whole wide world I have no other shelter but You. Whether the thunderbolt strikes or torrents of fresh waters shower down, the Cātaka bird, who drinks only the pure falling rainwater, perpetually goes on singing the glories of the raincloud."

Krishna is the friend of the fallen: *dinabandhu dayām vā*. He may do anything and everything at His sweet will. Rūpa Goswāmī prays, "You may make or mar, but I have no alternative but to want Your grace. Everything is tasteless to me, my Lord; please accept me, give me some sort of menial service to your holy feet." This is what is needed: our earnest and deep prayer towards Him for His grace, for His service, and to have no other alternative. We must be like the Cātaka bird who never takes any water, however pure, which has fallen on the earth, but only that from above. With her face to the sky, she waits, praying: "*pratik jala, pratik jala*—a drop of water, a drop of water." And water may come so profusely from the sky as to drown her, or a thunderbolt may come and finish her; whatever may come, whatever may happen, she has no other alternative but to pray: "O Lord, give a drop of Your grace. That grace is infinite. For You to give a drop is nothing, yet it may save the whole

world. So I have no other alternative." We must have such *śaraṇāgati*, surrender, and such hankering.

A Rare Chance

We can get much help from His associates, the devotees, the Lord's own. They are really our friends because in their association, our hankering may be increased. And, *sajati-yasaye snigdhe sādhau sangah svato vare* (B.r.s. 1:2:90): good association for us will be with a *sādhu* who is of the same line and also is superior to ourselves. In *sādhu-saṇga*, it is recommended that the *sādhu* be in the same line, of the same type of hankering and aspiration, as well as hold a superior position in devotion. We should think, "I shall try to throw myself at his disposal, and that will help me to the greatest extent."

This human life is rare, and it is transient; at any moment I may die. At any moment I may be finished here, and this chance may not occur again. This human life, with its special opportunity and some favorable environment, may not come again. So it is important to perceive the value of our time. We must be particularly conscious of the great value of our present moment.

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Parīkṣit Mahārāj asked Śukadev Goswāmī: "I have only one more week to live.

In this short time, please give me some instruction so that I may be saved."

Śukadev replied: "Oh, one week—that is enough!"

From Śukadev Goswāmī came this statement—a wonderful thing! He explained: "O King, we have passed so much time, so many lives, in this world. From time immemorial our existence has not been utilized. But only one second, if properly utilized, is sufficient, Mahārāj. So, try to utilize your time for the best possible purpose. There are so many mountains, so many trees, and they have long lives: what of that? If one is unattentive to one's own interest, a long life is of no value. But if we can properly understand our situation and our necessity, then only one moment, properly utilized, will produce immense growth in us, and immensely fruitful results."

Then Śukadev gave the history of Khaṭvāṅga Mahārāj and how he utilized the one moment he had left to live. Khaṭvāṅga Mahārāj asked the Gods: "Will you tell me how long I have to live?"

They replied: "Only one moment."

"Oh, then you all go. You cannot give me my desired result. Who can give me that?"

The Gods answered: "Only Nārāyaṇa can fulfill your desire."

And Khaṭvāṅga Mahārāj said: "Then all of you leave me, go!"

And without any reservation, he surrendered to the feet of the Lord; he engaged himself in His service and achieved his desired end:

khaṭvāṅgo nāma rājarṣir,
jñātveyatām ihāyuṣaḥ
muhūrtāt sarvam utsṛjya,
gatavān abhayaṁ harim

(S.Bhāg. 2:1:13)

"The saintly King Khaṭvāṅga, after being informed that the duration of his life would be only a moment more, at once freed himself from all material activities and took shelter of the supreme safety, the Personality of Godhead."

The Lord is specifically mentioned in this verse as Hari: *gatavān abhayaṁ harim*. Who is Hari? He is *abhayam*. When we get Him, then all apprehension, all fear and every undesirable thing will be vanquished forever. "Hari" means *sac-cid-ānanda*—eternal existence, perfect consciousness and the fulfillment of life in ecstatic joy. Mahārāj Khaṭvāṅga achieved all this within one moment!

Student: Mahārāj, I am very afraid to write anything

about Krishna consciousness because I have so many material desires. At the same time, when I go out and speak to people about Krishna and the sweetness of Krishna, I see how much they enjoy it. So I am thinking, even though I have no qualification, I should continue to write or to preach. Is this correct?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: It is laudable that you want to do good to others. Mahāprabhu has given a general instruction:

> **yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa**
> **āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa**
> *(Cc Madhya 7:128)*

"Wherever you go, whomever you meet, talk with them only about Krishna. Deliver this news to anyone and everyone, and new light will come to you, which in turn you are to distribute to others. In this way you will have a dynamic and progressive life, and there will be no shortage of higher backing. If you obey my command, then you will find that I am there, backing you in this work."

This is Mahāprabhu's general advice. Such distribution is the only necessity in this world, where all are entering the jaws of death at every moment. Mahāprabhu wants His followers to be agents, preaching Krishna's

devotion to the public, speaking about the special prospect of the land of Krishna, about Vrindavan.

So, it is laudable that you want to do good for others in this way; but at the same time, before doing so you must properly try to understand what is 'good' and then distribute that. This is no less important. It is very good to treat a patient, but you must know at least what the treatment is. Then you can treat the patient. That will be beneficial. How will one who is not properly adjusted venture to adjust others? First know your place, what is your proper adjustment in relation to the whole, and in that position your duty will be revealed to you.

Proper Use of Energy

At the time of the second Great War, a picture of a soldier's uniform was posted on the wall of the Writers Building in Calcutta. At the bottom of the poster it was written: "Put on this uniform, and the uniform will tell you what to do." This was the advice. So first we must have proper adjustment, we must find our proper position, and then the insinuation of our duty will come to us.

This is the first stage; it is known as *sambandha-jñāna*—to know who you are. Next is *abhideya*, the 'means to the end', the conception of my goal, my destination. How am I to attain that? What are the steps? Our

path must go in this way, otherwise the whole attempt will be unsystematic, haphazard. We should understand what is the proper utilization of our energy and act accordingly. This is necessary for systematic and substantial progress towards the goal; otherwise, anyone can do anything as he likes, and he will have to reap the results of his deeds accordingly.

First, *sambandha-jñāna*: one approaches the fundamental question, "Who am I? Where am I at present, and where should I be? What should be my position?" It is just as before going on a journey I must consult the map to see where I am and where I will have to go. Understanding one's position, one's orientation in relation to the destination, is "putting on the uniform." The uniform will tell me, "This is your duty," and I shall have to do that. I shall be ready to do whatever is required of me for my real progress.

Happy Aspiration

It is not that we should think, "I must be great! I shall be an Alexander, I shall be a Hanuman." Rather, if you want to be a simple cowherd boy, if you want to have the company of Krishna in that way, you will think, "It is so wonderful to become a cowherd boy, to have the duty of a cowherd boy!" Rabindranath Tagore composed one

song in which he says, "I don't want to be a famous leader, but rather I want to be a cowherd boy in Vrindavan, in the jungle. That is a very happy ideal to me, much more so than being a great leader of the world. It is a simple thing, a cowherd boy under the guidance of Krishna! That aspiration is very friendly to me." Such simple ambition is really something great. We pray that the ghost of worldly ambition will leave us forever. To desire the company of the Lord is a simple but very high aspiration.

It is also possible that in a lower stage, from a position in this world, a person will dedicate his activities to the Lord and approach Him that way. This is also accepted, but it is of a lower stage, approaching the Lord through the performance of one's own work. It is described in Bhagavad-gītā:

yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṁ,
yena sarvam idaṁ tatam
sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya,
siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ

(B.gītā 18:46)

"Man can achieve perfection by performing the appropriate duties prescribed for him according to his qualification. By the execution of such duties, he worships the Supreme Lord, Who is the Source of all beings and is all-pervading."

As a result of my past *karma*, I find myself floating somewhere in the material ocean, amongst the three modes of nature. If I try to offer whatever materials I find around me to the Infinite, I may make progress towards Him from my lower position.

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva mad arpaṇam
(B.gītā 9:27)

"Oh Kaunteya, whatever your action, whether scriptural or general, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you donate in charity, and any vow you keep—do everything as an offering unto Me."

To connect all of one's activities with the Lord by offering them to Him and to go on with one's duty, one who cannot understand higher devotion may begin his march toward the Absolute from his present position.

Nectar in the Golden Pot

The *śloka* at the conclusion of Bhagavad-gītā tells us:

sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja

ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayṣyāmi mā śucaḥ
(B.gītā 18:66)

"Totally abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender exclusively unto Me. I will deliver you from all kinds of sinful reactions, so do not fear."

This is the conclusion of Bhagavad-gītā, the clarion call to surrender. In his commentary on Śrī Gītā, Śrī Bala Gangadhara Tilak noted: "In this last *śloka*, Bhagavān Śrī Krishnacandra has served nectar in a golden pot. 'Wherever you are, leave your duty, your post and immediately come to Me. If you come to Me, complete fulfillment will come to you. It does not matter where you are posted at present. You may be a soldier, you may be a priest, you may be a dacoit, anyone! But if you leave your position and come to My feet, your aspiration will be perfectly fulfilled.'"

The Call of Gauranga

This is Mahāprabhu's call, the call of Gaurāṅga. With a flood of tears, Gaurāṅga is dancing and begging the people, "Take the Name of Krishna!"

When Mahāprabhu decided to take *sannyāsa*, His devotees did not know that He was going away, that He was leaving Nabadwīp forever. But the night before He left, He

attracted many of the devotees to come to see Him for the last time. Intuitively, they were drawn to Him, and they crowded together at His house. Everyone brought Him a garland. Mahāprabhu was giving all His devotees those garlands from around His own neck and ordering them: "When you go from here, speak only of Krishna."

āpana galāra mālā sabākāra diyā
ājñā kare prabhu-sabe kṛṣṇa gao giyā
ki śayana ki bhojane kibā jāgaraṇe
aharniśa cinta kṛṣṇa bolaha vadane
(C.Bhag.Madhya 28:25,28)

"I advise all of you, My friends, with this garland: take the Name of Krishna! While eating, while taking rest, while waking, always take the Name of Krishna. This is My last advice, My earnest entreaty to you all: take the Name of Krishna. Whatever you may be engaged in, always think of Krishna and call His Name aloud. This is My last appeal to you all. Just try to utilize all your time taking the Name of Krishna. By any means, try to the utmost to come to Krishna. There is no other necessity. This is My heartfelt appeal to you, Oh My friends."

Don't Cheat Me

In our time we have seen that our Guru Mahārāj

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur also preached with so much force, so much urgency. Once he was present at a *mahotsava*, a big festival, in Mayapur. When the celebration was over, Guru Mahārāj was sitting in a canvas chair on the verandah of his room; many people were coming before him, offering him obeisances and then leaving for their homes. I was always very eager to hear him, and I was present at that time. He was saying, "Don't cheat me, you people." I thought, "Why does he say that? Where is the question of cheating him? Everyone was invited to this festival; they came, and now they are leaving. What is his point about cheating?" But the next thing he said was, "You all came with the understanding that you will engage yourselves in the service of Krishna, and so I have entered into some relationship with you. And now, after attending this ceremony, only as a show, you are going home to engage yourselves in worldly affairs. But your assurance to me was that you would all serve Krishna." In this way he showed some disappointment.

Then he continued, "You may say, 'Oh, there will only be a little delay, I have got some important business, and after finishing that, I shall come back and join you as soon as possible.' But I say, no, no! Even if you tell me

there is a fire, and after extinguishing the fire you will return, then I will say that is also not necessary. There is no necessity of extinguishing the fire. It may burn the whole world—it does not do any harm to you. You do not lose anything; rather, you will be saved if that burnt world leaves your mind. All your inner necessities are met only at the holy feet of Krishna. None can satisfy your inner hankering but Krishna, *akhila rasāmṛta-mūrti*, the reservoir of all sweetness, all the *rasa*. Everything sweet you are aspiring for, or that you may ever aspire for is in His holy feet. And let this world be dissolved to zero. It can't have any effect on you. Rather, if the whole thing disappears, if it is burnt to ashes, you may be saved from that misconception."

The Greatest Mercy

But it is not so easy to burn the world of your present enjoying conception to ashes. Like a witch it is trapping you.

The solution lies in the service of Gaurāṅga, Mahāprabhu. As much as we can give ourselves to the holy feet of Śrī Gaurāṅga, automatically we shall find we are in the service of Rādhārānī. She is the highest negative potency, which can draw the maximum *rasa* from the positive, Krishna, Reality the Beautiful. *Rasa-rāj* and

mahā-bhāva: Krishna is *rasa-rāj*, full of infinite ecstasy, and Rādhārānī, *mahā-bhāva*, draws out that ecstasy for Herself and for the world. In Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, Rāmananda Rāya answers Mahāprabhu:

> **sukha-rūpa kṛṣṇa kare sukha āsvādana**
> **bhakta-gaṇe sukha dite 'hlādinī'—kārana**
> *(C.c Madhya 8:158)*

"Lord Krishna tastes all kinds of transcendental happiness, although He Himself is happiness personified. The pleasure relished by His pure devotees is also manifested by His pleasure potency (*hlādinī-śakti*)"

Rādhārānī represents a particular potency known as *hlādinī*. She is the main extracting machine of that *rasa* from Krishna, and She distributes it to the world outside. The highest quality of *rasa*, of ecstasy, is drawn by Her, from that dynamo of all *rasa*, Krishna, and distributed to others outside. It is due only to Her that others may hope to have the taste of any of that transcendental juice.

As much as we surrender to Śrī Gaurāṅga, as much as we are percolated by His energy, His instruction, automatically we shall find that we are placed in that highest position, in Her divine service. Otherwise, such a thing is very, very difficult to attain by direct approach. Many sorts of misgivings will come and pollute us. But if under

proper guidance we go through the instructions of Śrī Gaurāṅga, then our approach to that highest position of service will be the easiest, and our gain will be of the maximum degree and of the very purest character.

Gaurāṅga, is the Ocean of Mercy, and Kulia, where Śrī Caitanya Saraswat Maṭh now stands, is called *aparādha-bhañjanaf-patha*, the place where Gaurāṅga, gave general absolution to all the sinners. Anyone who came for His mercy here was granted it:

> **kuliyā-grāmete āsi śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya**
> **hena nāhi, yā' re prabhu nā karilā dhanya**
> *(C.Bhag: Antya 3:541)*

Student: Was it here in this area, in Kulia, that Jagāi and Mādhāi were forgiven?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: No, that was on the other side of the Ganges. Some say that Jagāi and Mādhāi were absolved just near here, at Haritolla; but we are to understand from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur that it was on the other side, in Māyāpur.

Student: So, how is this part of Nabadwīp called Kulia, the very special place, *aparādha-bhañjana-pata*? Did Mahāprabhu have some special pastimes here?

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: As I have mentioned, this is

where Mahāprabhu was most liberal in His mercy, forgiving all the sinners. When Mahāprabhu came back from Puri after five years of *sannyāsa*, He first came here. And He stayed at the house of Vidyā Vacāspati, the elder brother of Sarvabhauma Paṇḍit and formal *guru* of Sanātana Goswāmī in Vidyānagar. At that time there was such a rush of people coming to see Mahāprabhu from both sides of the Ganges that the whole Ganges appeared full of human heads.

Mad to See

One author has described the scene at the time of Mahāprabhu's return to Nabadwīp in this way: the whole Ganges was "filled up with human heads." When I read this, at first I thought, "Such a description must not be literal; it is a little hyperbolic." But later, when in my own life I saw (Mahātma) Gandhi, when I experienced the crowds that used to follow him, then it came to my mind, "If Gandhi can draw so many men to see him, then what to speak of Mahāprabhu?" There was such love, so great an intensity of love, that at that time everyone came madly to see that great Nimai Paṇḍit.

His scholarship was so extraordinary and His figure so extremely beautiful. Still so many *tantric* pandits had been against Him. So He left Nabadwīp in order to

preach. And the people cried, "Nimai Paṇḍit, we have lost our Nimai Paṇḍit!" The whole of Nabadwīp was dark without His presence. Then suddenly, "That Nimai Pandit has come back to us! He is with us, in our midst!" People were mad to see Him; the whole area was drawn irresistably towards Him. So that author has described that the Ganges was "all human heads."

Mahāprabhu came to this place, Kulia, and here all the previous sinners, all who had criticized Him, who had done any mischief, came to be absolved, thinking, "Nimai Paṇḍit is not a man, a human being." They came to Him for their confession and to get absolved of their sins.

After this, Mahāprabhu went to his mother's house and for a second just stood at the gate. Viṣṇu-priya came and fell at His feet, and at once He withdrew, giving the wooden sandals to her to worship. Then He left. After this He went to see Rūpa and Sanātana and then returned to Puri via Śāntipur. Later He went to Vrindavan; finally he came back to Jagannāth Puri and lived there continuously for eighteen years.

After five years of His *sannyāsa*, when Mahāprabhu came back just once to visit Nabadwīp, He came to this place; at that time, He was the most liberal in giving His

highest mercy to all, the most desirable service of the sweetest type, such as found in Vrindavan. After this, He left Nabadwīp, never to return.

Student: You have given such a high standard for us to follow.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj: If you feel that, then I think you are fortunate. And if I am able to sincerely know such things, to have a touch of such a high and divine knowledge, if I am able to receive these things from my Guru Mahārāj, then I also consider myself very fortunate.

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